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ENGLAND MUDDLES THROUGH

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BY

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

FOR some centuries British writers have asserted that no foreigner ever has quite succeeded in understanding their countrymen. This is largely a matter of definition. Such understanding as may have been achieved by outsiders may not, to the native, have seemed to comprise understanding at all. Yet since the time of Julius Cæsar men of other nations have obstinately persisted in recording their impressions of the inhabitants of these islands, and it is highly probable, if perhaps deplorable, that the process will continue.

The present author lays no claim to any extravagant measure of perception. On the other hand, his residence of rather more than eleven years in England as the correspondent of a great American newspaper presupposes a certain familiarity with, and perhaps even comprehension of, his subject. Because so many of the opinions hereinafter to be expressed have been formed through personal investigation and contact, rather than gleaned from other writers on the same subject, no formal bibliography is appended; individual quotations only are acknowledged.

Obviously the classification of people by nationality is a far from ideal method. Nothing is easier than to point out individuals who appear to personify the negation of any or every quality commonly ascribed to their

countrymen. Yet perhaps the denominator of common citizenship is as high a one as can be applied; it has, at least, the advantage of being generally accepted.

"Everyone," noted Henry Adams in his "Education," "must bear his own universe, and most persons are moderately interested in learning how their neighbors have managed to carry theirs." This volume constitutes an effort to give some idea how the Englishman attempts his task.

But when "the average Englishman" is hereafter mentioned in these pages, let no one think the author so fatuous as to believe that he has succeeded in applying a common measure to a highly individualistic race. "The Englishman" must remain a hypothetical figure. Perhaps, for all that, he does not wholly lack reality; for reality in England is often improbable and seldom logical!

H. E. S.

ENGLAND MUDDLES THROUGH

CHAPTER I

I

WITHIN the maturity of people who are only now in middle age, there has been wrought in England a change as fundamental, and possibly as far-reaching, as those entailed by the Black Death or the Industrial Revolution. We are still too close to the event to be able to do more than note its initial manifestations. Yet, even with the limited perspective of the early years of the second post-war decade, these can be traced with some confidence.

The changes brought by the war and its aftermath not only affect every superficial phase of English life, but have even permeated the basic philosophy of the nation and altered the very face of the land itself. Those of us who studied history before 1914 learned about an England which no longer exists, either materially or spiritually. However, although there has been universal alteration, there has been comparatively little obliteration; so that the activities and institutions of Englishmen are more than ever marked by apparent contradictions and irrelevancies.

Since in historical space-time 1914 is much farther away from 1932 than it is on the calendar, it would perhaps be advisable briefly to recapitulate some salient

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features of that earlier period, while avoiding, if possible, the now prevalent tendency to idealize it.

Although the long Victorian era of unparalleled prosperity and political stability was over the country was still, to a great extent, carried on the momentum of that earlier period. The structure of the State seemed thoroughly stratified. A comparatively small class was firmly in possession of the government and of most of the country's land and capital. The professional and commercial middle class was perhaps more prosperous and comfortable than any other similar class in the world. A numerous proletariat lived close to the subsistence level, had only just begun to reach for political power, and certainly had little consciousness of its own strength.

Against the Victorian individualism which still largely dominated the national mentality, twentieth-century collectivism had made strictly limited headway. "Survive or go under" was still the social philosophy; for the malcontents of whatever class there was the safety valve of emigration.

Meanwhile the lion's share of the world's industry, transport, and finance fell to the British; and the lion's share of the habitable surface of the globe was comprised in their Empire, than which nothing human seemed more stable.

The World War into which this Empire was plunged in 1914 resulted technically in a victory for Britain. But the winning, as well as the losing, of the war necessitated an effort on a scale so little in proportion to any other in modern times that "victory" and "defeat" be-

came terms no longer applicable in their old meanings. All the nations set loose forces which could be canalized while the military effort continued, but which, since then, have defied the efforts of the post-war statesmen to manipulate them.

The British Empire was particularly ill-equipped for a war on this scale. Its structure, as we now see, was capable of withstanding certain stresses, but it most certainly was not designed to support those of 1914-1918.

Thus we have the paradoxical situation obtaining to-day, when one has only to glance back over the balance sheet of 1914 to realize the curious connotations of "victory." The British Empire, for instance, has become the British Commonwealth of free nations. The lion's share of the world's business which falls to Great Britain to-day is the share of a middle-aged lion who isn't what he was in 1914. Within England itself the upper classes retain only a modified form of social dominance, having lost much of their financial and most of their political power; the middle class struggles to make ends meet, while the proletariat has become enfranchised and thoroughly conscious of its own potential position as the arbiter of the nation's destinies.

Yet compensations as well as disadvantages have ensued. Adversity has made of the survivors better citizens of the world, and of their own nation, than they were eighteen years ago. Sometimes the improvement has been consciously, sometimes unconsciously, realized and there are, of course, those Diehards who hold it not to be improvement at all. We have no means of predicting the eventual verdict of history; meanwhile it

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is possible to trace in some detail the changes that have taken place and to submit, with all humility, an individual estimate of the manner in which the post-war Englishman has adjusted himself to his new world.

II

This adjustment has been anything but painless and is by no means complete. Indeed, it is only within the last two or three years that there has been anything like a general and conscious acceptance on the part of the individual of his changed status.

Ten years or so were required to convince a great many Englishmen—perhaps the majority of them—that the clock could never be turned back to 1914. During the years immediately following the Armistice there was an almost universal feeling that by some mysterious alchemy the spacious pre-war days could be made to return. Even those people who had not been noticeably enthusiastic about the 1914 scene found it, in retrospect, infinitely preferable to that of 1919. "Pre-war" as a qualifying phrase, whether for whiskey or for morals, bore a connotation implying extreme excellence.

Reorientation was accompanied sometimes by a series of shocks; sometimes it was achieved gradually because there was nothing else to do but to accept it. The shocks included the foundation of the Irish Free State; the acceptance of naval limitation at the Washington Conference; the refusal of the Dominions to consider the possibility of going to war over Chanak; the fund-

ing of the war debt to the United States; the assumption of office by the first Labor Government, and the general strike of 1926. On the other hand, it was their mere persistence for ten years that led people to accept as more or less permanent such things as high taxation and heavy unemployment.

Some of us who live here thought to discern toward the end of the first post-war decade the beginnings of conscious realization that the old world was gone and that there had arrived a new one which, whatever its merits or demerits, bore little similarity to its predecessor. It was at this time (1928) that the man in the street had about ceased to take for granted the inevitable supremacy of Britain as a world Power, or to assume the inevitable permanence of the existing social, industrial, and political organization.

History may rank it as Britain's greatest achievement of the post-war years that this disillusionment seems to have been accepted philosophically; that it has led, thus far, neither to rash foreign adventure on the one hand nor to domestic upheaval on the other. One inserts the qualification "thus far" from a journalistic sense of precaution; there is, as a matter of fact, ground for the belief that both tangential courses have been pretty definitely avoided. The fact that the general strike of 1926 could be ended without a single death alone seems to indicate that the settlement of domestic troubles will be orderly, if perhaps acrimonious. And not since Lord Curzon's tenure of the Foreign Office has British foreign policy been aggressive or belligerent to any dangerous extent.

III

It is difficult to say whether the acceptance of the inevitable commends itself to the English as philosophically, as well as of necessity, desirable. Probably, since the English have more than the usual human dislike of innovation, it does not. But the speculation is academic, for the English are realists, albeit sometimes unwilling ones.

Perhaps a better way of putting it would be to say that this race, whether through environment or through experience, has developed a certain inherent balance and stability that stands it in good stead in times of rapid change. Mr. Winston Churchill, for instance, with his Napoleonic complex and his cheery disregard of actualities, would seem to be the ideal British Mussolini; yet so little is he considered dangerous that he is regarded by his political opponents with something bordering on tolerant affection. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, on the other hand, although he has twice been a Socialist Prime Minister, is by temperament an ideal member of the House of Lords. The majority of the politicians, writers, and others who shape public opinion have accepted the necessity for cutting the national garment according to the cloth. And that cloth is definitely neither the broadcloth of the Victorian squire nor the scarlet material of the old full-dress uniform. The garment cut from it will perhaps be more drab, less colorful, than the old ones, but the change is inexorable.

Certainly for the country at large the trappings of imperialism have worn as threadbare as the Victorian social attitude. But while only in the pages of *Punch*

and in the more benighted suburbs is any serious lament voiced for the halcyon days of

God bless the squire and his relations
And keep us in our proper stations,

the change in Britain's attitude toward other nations has been relatively so sudden that it is still imperfectly understood in the United States and scarcely at all on the Continent, where the old "perfidious Albion" theory is still going strong.

Yet no British Government to-day would any more dare to steer the country into a major war than it would think of trying to restrict the franchise within the country to its pre-war scope. Britain is trying to settle down on a "live and let live" basis.

The domestic phase of this process is sufficiently difficult without foreign distractions. Although even the hard-crusted individualists are beginning to catch glimmerings of man's duties as a social animal, the dead hand of tradition still clutches firmly. To take examples at random, the parliamentary system is archaic; the processes of the civil law are medieval; the organization of industry is still much too Victorian. Peace is an absolute necessity if such pre-war foundations of the post-war structure are to be repaired and modernized; to say nothing of it as a necessity if the social structure of the State is to be preserved.

IV

Indeed, even if the rest of the world behaves itself, it is by no means certain that Britain will be able to do more than muddle through to the point of coping suc-

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cessfully with post-war conditions. Only a few years ago it seemed definitely that the task was a hopeless one. Other nations with better equipment, cheaper labor, and lower taxes were forging ahead and leaving the British at the post. But 1930 and 1931 showed that the machine is a capricious mistress, and that at least for the time being those who had treated it with the greater respect got along relatively better than those who had embraced it too ardently.

Still, for good or for evil, England has allied its fate with that of the machine. It is physically impossible that the forty-odd million inhabitants of this island should sustain themselves from their own soil. There are only two destinies before this nation. One is that its inhabitants shall continue to procure their food through the exportation of their handiwork; the other is a gradual retrogression to the status of a second-class Power. The present conditions of Sweden, Holland, and Switzerland indicate that the latter alternative might not prove an unmitigated evil. Yet it scarcely commends itself to the imagination of the average Englishman.

In all probability, at least another twenty years must elapse before it can be said with any certainty which road England is following. In the meantime the sign-posts will point in both directions; and perhaps the more accurate ones will not be those raised among the arid acres of Whitehall's statistics, but those less easily decipherable among the thoughts and actions of the people themselves.

CHAPTER II

I

ONE of the predominant features of the old English life was the stratification of society. By a dozen different touchstones people could be classified and ticketed; by their family, their place of residence, their income, their education, their accent, their clothes, their politics, their religion, their sports. Nor was there an easy process of transition from one class to another. In a society such as the American, where the social structure is less rigid and where one individual may, in various phases of his daily activities, participate actively in the life of a score of social groupings, it is a comparatively simple matter gradually to divert the current of one's life. In pre-war England this was not impossible, but certainly very difficult. When a man reached the top it was almost always as an outstanding representative of some particular and well-defined section or interest; the upward progress was marked not so much by an imperceptible shifting from one stratum to another as by advancement within the same class. And for one individual who was dynamic there were a thousand who were static. It took a strong man to storm the barriers which those who had got there first had raised to protect themselves.

The resulting impression produced upon the foreigner

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was not so much that of a predominantly bourgeois nation, like France or Germany, as of an oligarchy. The pattern of the national life was woven to conform to the tastes of perhaps two million of the 40,000,000 inhabitants. The remaining 38,000,000 in the main spent their lives in performing the tasks allocated to them, scarcely questioned the dispensation which regulated their existence, and died leaving less than £100 each as the material result of their labors.

It might not seem that such a system as the one just outlined would contain within itself the reserves of vitality necessary to found and maintain an empire, or to make of the mother country for a century the world's greatest industrial nation. But the immediate pre-war system was the product of an organization quite different from itself; it is indeed not in that system, but in those which preceded it, that the answer must be sought by those striving to account for the fact of British supremacy.

Eight hundred years of ordered government and of practical freedom from foreign invasion preceded 1914. It would be strange if within that period a workable, if not necessarily a logical, system of national existence had not been evolved. By the trial-and-error method the successive upper classes learned what they could or could not do with the proletariat; when it was necessary to be firm and when to make concessions—in a word, how to fix in the political sense the point of greatest net returns. The rulers of this country recognized the doctrine of marginal utility long before they ever heard it described by that name.

By the time the Industrial Revolution had got well

under way, a certain stability had been achieved. No really serious internal disorder had taken place for well over a century; the nucleus of the Empire had begun to take shape; and simultaneously the need for a more enlightened colonial policy, which was forcibly indicated by the successful American Revolution, began to be appreciated.

The common man did not vote, and there is little evidence that he desired to do so. His conditions of life were primitive, but it may be questioned whether the gap that separated the peasant from his squire was as wide as that which in 1914 separated the Manchester mill operative from the Park Lane millionaire. Most important of all, the greater part of the country's population was deeply rooted in the soil, and the nation, to a considerable extent, was self-sustaining.

But industrialism ran away with Britain. Simultaneously with the rise of the new manufacturers the landowners were infected by their greed and revived the process of enclosing common land. It was half a century before the first correctives began to be applied, and another fifty years before industrialism began to be subjected to anything like adequate control.

Just in time to avoid being too late, the political genius of the race was able to adapt itself to the new conditions. The enfranchisement of the population was begun; free and then compulsory education was inaugurated; and there commenced that series of measures of social legislation which has continued until the present day. Each concession was made, with remarkable nicety, just when it no longer could be deferred.

The first decade of the twentieth century seemed to

mark a new level of stability. Naturally there were those who viewed with alarm. The causes of alarm were Ireland, Socialism, Germany, suffragettes, and a few hundred other things. But the dominant note to be gleaned from the literature of the twenty years preceding 1914 is unquestionably one of self-confidence on the part of those who controlled Britain's destiny. Both externally and internally, the State seemed secure.

Very pleasant indeed was that pre-war life—for the two million. The roads to power again had become signposted and confined between neat hedges, just like the actual physical roads of the island; and both categories were quite adequate to bear their volume of traffic. Thus it had become as easy for a brewer to get a peerage as it had been for a great landowner a century earlier, or for a monarch's favorite or his illegitimate son a century or two before that; or for a fighting man who could raise a goodly levy in Norman times. And to be a peer meant something, even in 1914. The Parliament Act was passed by Commoners who admittedly wanted to curtail the power of the Lords, but who had no intention of letting their own resultant increased power get out of the hands of their own class.

In the Church, the Army, the Navy, and the professions, a similar state of compromise had been reached. In general, ability counted for less than did family, money, or influence. Nevertheless ability alone could carry the exceptional man to the top; and when he got there the rewards, tangible and intangible, were well worth having. There was the custom of primogeniture to guard against a too great increase in the privileged

class through the operation of the birth rate alone; it was for the younger sons to shift for themselves or gradually to sink back in the social and financial scales.

For those people on the way up or down, and for the great middle class which, by that time, had placed several generations between itself and the soil, life was still comparatively easy. The cost of living compared with, for instance, that in the United States, was definitely low. The cost of human service was greatly less and its quality, on the whole, high.

There was not very much for these people to worry about at nights. They lived in comfortable homes; they wore good clothes; their dietary, if restricted in range, nevertheless satisfied them and was of excellent quality. Mostly they had a sane outlook toward their occupations—or, if they lived on private incomes, toward their avocations. They were well served, both in private and in public; they were not over-taxed; their children were being well educated; they had sufficient time for sport, for exercises, and for holidays; the best available literature, drama, art, and music were at their command. To these people the stability of the British Constitution, the Church of England, the government, the monetary and industrial systems seemed as obvious as the reality of the gold sovereigns in their purses. Few had ever visualized any menace to public order, or any serious possibility of a socialized State.

They lived and prospered on the assumption that their 38,000,000 fellow countrymen (not to mention the 300,000,000 Indians and the uncounted millions of

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other races under their sway) would obligingly refrain from emulating Oliver Twist and asking for more. And indeed, had there been no war, or had the war been the kind of war that every one anticipated when it started, they might still be doing so.

II

But this system contained fatal weaknesses. In providing itself with large supplies of cheap labor it had created a huge urbanized proletariat which must, at all costs, be fed, but which, by no possibility, could be fed without supplies from overseas. It also had trained that proletariat to look mainly outside its own ranks for guidance.

Could the war have been ended in 1916 the English system would, in all probability, have justified itself. But the slaughter of the Somme battles drained away the pick of the nation's young manhood without precipitating any definite decision. By 1917, when Britain reached the point of organization for modern warfare that Germany had possessed when the war started, it was almost too late. The submarine campaign was playing havoc with the country's overseas supplies; war weariness had set in on the home front. As the late C. E. Montague pointed out in "Disenchantment," you cannot get out of a machine more than you put into it. The later British levies simply did not have the stamina or endurance of the earlier ones. It was not their fault. It was the fault of the system which had failed adequately to provide for their fathers and grandfathers. When the war finally ended, not only did the Americans

but even the Chinese and the Costa Ricans have to be permitted to share the glory; the pledges made to the short-rationed and conscripted proletariat had to be honored; and the upper classes had to begin taxing themselves out of existence to pay the bill.

Only a few people were farsighted enough to see what would happen. One was the late Lord Lansdowne, whose famous "peace letter" to the *Daily Telegraph* in 1917 expressed admirably the views which many of his peers must have held without being frank enough to voice them. But the logic of events proved stronger than Lord Lansdowne's; the war continued, and when it ended in 1918 the old England had passed beyond recall.

III

Therefore, one of the inevitable impressions of the observer of the present-day scene must be that of an altered social accent, a shift in the center of gravity of the communal life. The lines of demarcation between the classes have become blurred, despite the fact that there is no discernible effort on the part of the lower and middle classes to take over the old upper-class standards.

Innumerable contributory causes share the credit for this fact. Many of them naturally trace back to the war. Before 1914 it had scarcely occurred to the manual laborer that he was indispensable in the scheme of things entire; and if he had a shrewd suspicion that his overlords were humanly fallible, he had been afforded neither the opportunity nor the incentive for

proving it to his own satisfaction. Before 1918 the opportunity came to him in ample measure. On the home front he had only to go on strike to cause his wages to mount astronomically; in the army he had only to be demobilized and to come back home, walking ever so gently and behaving ever so well, to cause his rulers to realize that this man of widened experience, considerable disillusionment concerning many things hitherto held sacred, and a dangerous proficiency in the use of firearms and the arts of destruction—that this man could not easily be relegated to his former status as a hewer of wood or drawer of water. Or, rather, that while he was willing again to hew the wood and draw the water, the process was to be arranged on a different basis from heretofore.

Naturally the former ruling classes have not exactly gone out of their way to trumpet the enthronement of King Demos. Instead, they have sought, still using the trial-and-error method, to reach a *modus vivendi*. Thus in 1919 an assembly of rebellious soldiery on the Horse Guards' Parade could be cowed by a threat of superior military force. In 1921 a defense force was enlisted for use against the striking miners, but it was never called upon to act. By the time of the general strike of 1926 no man was sworn in by the government in a capacity more belligerent than that of a special constable. No single shot was permitted to be fired.

Of course the proletariat's own attitude enormously facilitated the peaceful reapportionment of powers. As the upper and middle classes refrained from Fascism, so did the lower class abstain from "direct action." The

result has sometimes been such a similarity of policy upon the part of the different political parties that it has seemed that the only real difference between them lay in their ideas concerning the means to be adopted toward the same end, and the speed with which that end was to be approached.

IV

Because the foreign observer or visitor comparatively seldom comes into intimate social contact with the middle classes, and because those of the lower classes whom he meets are either by training or by nature inarticulate, it is difficult for him to appreciate the new order of things. In such events as the general election of 1931, in which an overwhelmingly Conservative Parliament was returned, he may think to discern clear evidence that England has made an end of apostasy and declared unmistakably for the old gods again. The loss to the Labor Party of some of its best-known leaders he may regard as clear evidence of a general swing away from Socialism.

Yet to assume that the clock thus could be set back, without taking into consideration the fact that the English electoral system played some very queer tricks in the 1931 contest, would be short-sighted as well as misleading. The Labor Party as such may revive or may disintegrate; it will make comparatively little difference. In these days of universal adult suffrage, every party must perforce bid for the votes of millions of people who will in the last analysis be guided by self-interest. There is no evidence that the proletariat de-

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sires again to pass under the yoke of financial and political domination.

Even in 1931, when press and politicians combined in a terrific campaign of crisis-mongering, and when the Labor Party itself was badly split, nearly seven million out of twenty-one million people who voted cast their ballots for Labor candidates. Labor was practically without leadership; such a constructive policy as the candidates were able to throw together was extremely feeble; and the cuts in official salaries and in the "dole" which were proposed by the National Government were both comparatively small and explained as justifiable by a really grave national emergency. Seven million may therefore be reckoned as the irreducible minimum of voters who were not prepared to make sacrifices under any consideration whatever.

In his brilliant book, "*England's Crisis*," M. André Siegfried noted that "no one dares come out boldly and tell the people, electorally at any rate, what they must do to break the deadlock—lower the standard of living and work harder." Certainly in 1931 the National Government candidates laid no stress upon the prospect of a lower standard of living, but instead promised a higher standard for everybody. They realized that an increasingly large number of Englishmen doubt whether, on M. Siegfried's terms, it is worth while breaking such a deadlock as may exist. "To lower the standard of living and to work harder" may be indicated; but to the lower-class Englishman it inevitably implies a state of affairs in which not he, but his employer or some other capitalist, will benefit.

Whether labeling himself Socialist or Conservative, the modern Englishman seems increasingly to incline to what might be termed a sort of modified State capitalism, the object of which is the enforcement of industrial rationalization through the application of political pressure. The cruder kind of Socialism, with dukes and dustmen receiving the same standardized wage, has been abandoned by everybody except Mr. George Bernard Shaw and the Communists. The idea now is rather that some directing intelligence should be applied to the overhaul of England's illogical financial and industrial structure, to the elimination of some of the terrific overhead imposed by unnecessary competition, and to the revision of antiquated methods.

The program is a brave one; and when confronted squarely with the choice of adopting it or abandoning it the official Labor leaders, who had hitherto claimed it as their private property, lost their nerve. But four-fifths of their followers stood firm, and voted for the ideal rather than for the shaken remnant of leaders who were only one degree less terrified than those who went over to the other side.

Perhaps in the long run this will be good for England. Reforms put into effect by zealots frequently suffer from overemphasis. The way now is clear for a piecemeal rationalization, for half measures instituted by men who are by no means convinced that they are the prophets of a new heaven and earth; and this, after all, is the kind of reform to which the English are accustomed, and to which they take most kindly.

CHAPTER III

I

BUT what of this post-war, transitional England—its people, their institutions, their characteristics?

Europeans have complained that they are asked their impressions of America before their steamer ties up at the dock side. The English reporter possibly is more patient; or perhaps he merely is handicapped by the fact that Liverpool and Southampton are several hours' travel from Fleet Street. In any event, the new arrival is allowed time to sort out his impressions and to achieve some kind of perspective.

What those impressions would be in the case of an intelligent observer who had known England intimately until 1914, but had not returned since that time, naturally would depend much upon his own interests, and not a little upon the order in which the predominant features of present-day England were presented to him. Thus, a Colonial bishop who, a couple of years ago, was asked to summarize his impressions of England after such an absence as has just been suggested, replied simply, "Pink legs." Certainly at that time no one could have helped noticing that Englishwomen had legs, and that the vast majority of them were clad in pink artificial silk stockings. But the fact, however strong an impression it made upon the episcopal consciousness, was a transitory one. Skirts rose, only to fall again.

A more significant—and symbolic—fact, which would greet the visitor even as he stepped on shore, would be the curious combination of medievalism and efficiency characterizing the processes attendant upon his debarkation. He would, assuming him not to be a British subject, be courteously informed by an immigration official that while for two months he might roam the British Isles at his fancy, at the expiration of that time it would be necessary for him to report to the police. Why two months? Nobody knows. It has been suggested that the Home Office assumes that no alien ("foreign visitor" since 1931 and the rise of the British Travel Association) would misbehave during his first two months here and that thereafter the police would have an eye on him. Of course the fact of the matter is that two months was the period selected by some inscrutable process of the official mind and that since the regulation has been enforced ever since the war, it has acquired a certain mild sacrosanctity. Indeed the whole matter of the official status of foreigners in England is the subject of just such lunatic regulations, but it is, on the whole, interpreted by the officials with disarming friendliness and robust common sense.

The traveler, then, would pass on to the customs examination. Somehow, in a rather hit-or-miss fashion, his baggage would have been collected by a porter, not necessarily at a part of the customs shed designated by the initial of his surname, or by a number, or by anything else, and he would find that there are some dozens of articles that he could not bring into this traditionally free-trade country without paying duty upon them.

This ordeal negotiated, he would proceed to the boat train. His trunks, without official receipt or other evidence of ownership or destination, would have been placed in the luggage van to await his identification of them at the London terminus. His hand luggage would be festooned about the racks of his compartment and sooner or later the train would start.

A highly casual, old-fashioned proceeding! Yet, somehow or other, if our traveler consulted his watch, he would find that the whole business had occupied less time than if every stage of it had been ordered and documented and mechanized.

His sense of paradox would be heightened by the circumstances attendant upon his train journey. If the weather were cold he would almost certainly find that the heating apparatus in his compartment did not function, or at best produced a very mild warmth. As he walked to the lavatory compartment he might well marvel at the excellence of the roadbed and the skill of the engineer at stopping and restarting his train without jerk or jar; but once inside the lavatory, it would be odds against his finding a clean towel and in the highest degree improbable that anything but cold water would issue from the tap optimistically marked "hot." If he knew something of the post-war licensing laws the visitor might be surprised to find that he could obtain alcoholic drink on the train, even during the hours at which the "pubs" normally are closed. He would certainly be pained by the tepid soup, the discouraged slab of cod or halibut, the flavorless beef or mutton, the overboiled potatoes and cabbage, and the

soggy pudding or dry cheese that would constitute his luncheon in the restaurant car ; but the service would be such as some other countries could not buy for love or money. And as for the coffee—but enough ! There is no compensation for, and few antidotes to, the concoction that in these islands is supposed to be coffee.

Even moderate observation from the windows of his carriage could scarcely fail to move the traveler to certain reflections. First of all he would have noticed the greenness of the countryside, even though it were winter. It might occur to him also that between his port town and London the train was running through territory far more rural and less urbanized than that, for instance, between New York and Washington ; and he would wonder about England's 600-odd inhabitants to the square mile and where they kept themselves. At this stage it might strike him that the answer was to be found in the towns through which his train flashed, the compact towns and cities, usually chiefly remarkable to him by a Norman church tower or by the inexplicably ugly pink roofs of the fruit of post-war housing schemes.

II

But we have endowed our traveler with a pre-1914 knowledge of England and it might well have seemed to him that as yet everything that he had seen differed comparatively little from its pre-war prototype. He would admit that his ticket to London and his luncheon cost twice as much as they did eighteen years ago ; that he tipped even more than twice as much as formerly.

He would grant you the almost total substitution of the motor car for the horse on such country roads as were visible from the windows of the train. He would admit that the poles in every back garden, bearing wireless antennæ, were new; that the billboards proclaimed the virtues of unfamiliar shops or patent medicines.

"But these things," he would say, "were only to be expected. Where are the revolutionary changes you were telling me about?"

"Ah," you would reply, "that's where the catch comes in. Some of the revolutionary changes you have seen already, but failed to notice. For instance, the restaurant-car attendant whom you tipped a shilling instead of threepence: has it struck you that he has a vote these days? Or that, if he lost his job, the State would see to it that he did not go cold or hungry? And these motor cars which you accept so calmly as having displaced the horse: have you considered the fact that they are helping to drive this railway out of business? And those wireless masts: do you know that in this country broadcasting is a semi-governmental monopoly and that, if necessary, it can be utilized, as it was during the general strike, to spread the government's instructions though newspapers be closed down and billposters be on strike? And——"

But it is charitable to assume that at this point the train drew into Waterloo or Paddington, or that the traveler pulled the communication cord, or that an inspector found that you were in a first-class compartment with a third-class ticket!

III

Sooner or later our explorer would find himself forced to admit that generalization about "the Englishman" is next to impossible. Being, we hope, of a scientific turn of mind, he would then either set about outlining certain abstract qualities such as bravery, or sense of humor, or religious enthusiasm and trying to see to how many Englishmen he could apply them, or else he would attempt to divide the population into classes defined by such boundaries as income, political leanings, or belief in a future life.

The latter process he would find far easier and simpler. Although in the structure of English life there are innumerable divisions and subdivisions, the factor which, in the main, still conditions the Englishman's activities is that of income or wealth; and the application of this criterion still shows the existence of definite, if not precisely defined, upper, middle, and lower classes.

IV

To an amazing degree the connecting link between these classes lies in the institution of monarchy which has not for centuries enjoyed in England such popularity as it possesses to-day. It is the difficult task of the King to try to be all things to all men, a task which he could not possibly fulfill if he retained any serious vestige of political power, but which, as things are, he discharges with remarkable success.

It is, of course, not at the instigation of the King

himself, but at that of his ministers, that the impression is conveyed that the Throne is Tory when a Tory Government is in power, Liberal when there is a Liberal Prime Minister, and Socialist when a Labor Cabinet takes office. The King's speech at the opening of Parliament is prepared by the Cabinet. It is not his fault if he is made on one occasion to speak deprecatingly of the temper of the labor unions and six months later gently to chastise the employers. Nobody knows just what would happen if his Majesty should refuse to speak the piece prepared for him. The last recorded instance of royal independence in this regard was when George IV, on a bet, paused in the speech from the Throne and gravely pronounced the words :

Baa, baa, black sheep.

But nobody noticed it except one cynic who thought that the King was interjecting a personal reference to the leader of the Opposition; and the lack of response seems to have discouraged his Majesty from repeating the experiment.

It is particularly fortunate that the present King seems genuinely to be a man of tolerance and wide sympathies. Successive Cabinets refrain from forcing him to express himself in too partisan a spirit; and not improbably the middle course which is more or less the result represents his Majesty's personal, as well as his official, predilection.

However, it is entirely outside the domestic political sphere that there rests the peculiar utility of the monarchy. The great overseas Dominions have pretty well

cut loose from any obligations imposed upon them by the British Constitution; but George V as a person remains "of the dominions overseas King." After all, a Constitution or a Declaration of Independence cannot hold garden parties, cannot pay State visits, cannot personally pin decorations on a uniform lapel. I do not know of any country where smoking is not permitted at a dinner party before the toast of "The Rights of Man" or "The Bimetallic Standard"; yet he is luckless who in England thoughtlessly lights his cigarette before the toastmaster has given the toast of "The King"!

But this intense personification of the institution of monarchy has its dangers as well as its advantages; it tends to vest even the survival of the monarchy in the personality of the occupant of the Throne. There is no republican sentiment in Britain to-day as there was in the 1870's, but, on the other hand, the King could not possibly immure himself for reasons of private grief as Queen Victoria did following the death of the Prince Consort. Royalty has achieved its wide popularity at the cost of being forced to submit to as exigent a public demand as is a motion-picture star. Perhaps the demand is even more exigent, for the King must please all classes. To the upper class he must provide a Court about which society can revolve; to the middle class he must stand as a personification of the bourgeois virtues, while, to the lower class, he must stand for sympathy and understanding with the troubles of the poor.

The president of a republic can indulge now and then in the luxury of taking sides; the King of England

can not. Moreover, in these days when every word, movement, and gesture of royalty is broadcast with all the appliances of modern publicity, there can be nothing perfunctory nor half-hearted about a king's performance of his duties. The Lord Mayor's speech may be boring him damnable; the rattle of rifles when the Guards salute may give him a headache; the progress of the royal carriage along sanded streets through miles of cheering people may be accompanied by a persistent draft down the back of his neck; but he must nevertheless look as though he enjoyed it.

His Majesty King George V is very good at his job. The only recorded instances in which he has ventured to express political opinions have turned out fortunately—for instance, when he pleaded for conciliation in Ireland in 1921, and when, following the general strike, he broadcast an appeal for “no recriminations.” It is doubtless true, as suggested by Mr. H. W. Nevinson, Professor Dibelius, and other modern writers, that the King finds means to have his political opinions conveyed more or less regularly to the leading politicians, but there is not a shadow of evidence that he attempts a fraction of the interference practiced by Queen Victoria, or even by King Edward.

When the Prince of Wales eventually succeeds to the throne it is not improbable that his political influence will be more marked than that of his father. It is at least possible that the prince will live to reign over an England in which far more institutions will have been removed from the sphere of strictly party politics than at present. Even as prince he has shown an occasional

flash of impatience, an itching to be allowed to try his hand at setting something right. He also is unable to conceal his boredom quite as successfully as his father; and that, too, may be a hopeful sign.

For a time the prince's resolute refusal to marry seemed likely to endanger his popularity. But the marriage of his younger brother, the Duke of York, and the birth of the Princess Elizabeth curiously enough removed this reproach. Already the penny press and the illustrated weeklies have progressed nobly with the task of "selling" the great sentimental public the idea of "the little Queen." Indeed, so enthusiastic did they become that on more than one occasion the duke circulated a private plea for moderation—and did not thereby enhance his popularity in Fleet Street.

Meanwhile the popularity of the Prince of Wales shows no sign of diminution. It even survives his repeated world tours, for however popular these have rendered him abroad, they have failed to produce a great effect upon his subjects at home. The prince's hold on the public esteem derives chiefly from his possession of that quality which, for lack of a better description, might be termed personal magnetism. There is that about him which attracts people of all classes and which, in prince or pauper, is impossible of analysis in cold blood. Sentimentalists have sought to revive about him a sort of "Black Prince" legend, but the British public will have none of it, and finds a closer resemblance to that Prince Hal who later became Henry V.

CHAPTER IV

I

To define the "upper class" is about as easy as to define a "gentleman" or a "patriot"; so very much depends upon the point of view of the definor. It is impossible to apply yardsticks of wealth, of culture, of social position, or of achievement; the reality cuts across all these. Yet it also takes account of them.

Perhaps a foreign commentator would not be too grotesquely wrong in begging the question and saying that membership of the upper class consists in being considered as such by the rest of the community. The tendency of the average Englishman to draw this distinction is as keen—and perhaps as instinctive—as that of the old-time Southern negro to differentiate between "quality" and "po' whites."

For several centuries the question of definition was comparatively simple. The basic qualification was the possession of land; and to the landowners were added a sprinkling of those eminent in the Church, the Army, the law, or at Court. But first the merchants, then the industrialists, and, finally, the financiers had to be admitted and not infrequently ennobled.

To a very considerable extent, membership of the upper class to-day, as determined by the Englishman himself, is a matter of the possession of wealth. The

income-tax laws set the supertax figure at £2,000 a year; and within very wide limits individuals who have more than this sum can be considered as in the upper ranks. This generalization is, of course, as imperfect as most generalizations are. Many a head waiter, many a bookmaker, earns more than this, and yet would neither consider himself nor wish to be considered as "gentry." Many a holder of an ancient title, many land-owners, many people whose standing is beyond question have less. But to explain all the various qualifications of family, habits, education, achievement, or personality which go to determine class membership would be an encyclopedic task. One can do no more here than to touch the fringes of them.

The upper class is by general consent considered to include the few thousand holders of titles of nobility or knighthood, and their immediate families. Similarly it includes a large proportion of the more prominent officers of the military services; of the Church; the professions; of those who have attended any of eight or nine public schools or the two senior universities; and a proportion, probably less large, of prominent writers, actors, sculptors, painters, singers, journalists. It takes in men who are in business on a large scale and who have adopted its social and critical standards.

Dozens of efforts have been made to coin epigrams which by their connotations will imply what is difficult to set down at length. Classic ones are those such as "a gentleman is a man who never bilks his tailor," "a man who dresses for dinner," "one who prefers caviar to kippers." Most of these are like the old formula of

the Royal Irish Constabulary: "Not drunk, but having drink taken." That is, they are very informative if you know their background sufficiently well not to need information about it.

It is much the same with spontaneous individual appraisals. Between the cockney's "'E's a gentlemen; 'e don't blow on 'is tea, 'e fans it with 'is 'at," and the member of the Carlton Club who said the Prince of Wales was no gentleman because he had the bottoms of the trousers of a formal morning suit made with turn-ups, the difference is one of degree only.

Clearly the general tendency is to place among the upper classes those individuals who, without definite social disqualifications or too great a degree of political radicalism, wield an influence disproportionate to their numbers in shaping the communal life. Many of the shibboleths of this class have penetrated to and been adopted by the middle and even the lower ranks; and this circle not infrequently is completed by their abandonment by their originators.

Thus, the vogue of wearing distinctive neckties with particular color combinations sacred to Eton, or the Guards, or the I Zingari Cricket Club spread until it became meaningless. Practically all the available color combinations having been used up, it is now somewhat difficult to tell at a glance whether a particular arrangement of red and blue stripes denotes a member of the Guards' Club or the Upper Tooting Literary and Debating Society. It was the same with "plus fours" and "Oxford bags."

II

Indeed, it is in this matter of clothes that there may be perceived one of the minor post-war revolutions. At the turn of the century the garb of the male civilian in England was the subject of regulations scarcely less definite, if unwritten, than those laid down for the uniforms of military or naval officers. Mr. R. D. Blumenfeld, the editor of the *Daily Express*, has related in his diary how he was severely "ticked off" by a City magnate for sending to interview him a reporter who actually wore a soft hat! Tweeds or a soft collar were anathema unless in "the country." A morning coat was the only possible wear for any sort of formal daytime occasion, while a black coat and black-and-white striped trousers were indispensable for the City clerk or the professional man. Transgression of these rules was not a matter for amusement; it was serious. The result was that almost one's first glance at a stranger served to "place" him to a certain extent.

"Does he look like a gentleman?" How many stage parlor-maids had to answer this question in the good old Edwardian days! But to-day no playwright would use such a line except for the purpose of getting a laugh with some flippant answer. Impossible, to-day, to say whether he does or doesn't! For since the war men have taken to wearing more or less what pleases them and the only hints still published about what the well-dressed man will wear this autumn are contained in the columns of newspapers which, like the *Daily Mail*, appeal chiefly to the lower middle class. The double-

breasted waistcoat created in Bond Street to-day will be in the cheap clothier's in the Strand next week; and the man who calls at your office wearing baggy tweeds and carrying a badly rolled umbrella may want to borrow half a crown, or he may be a peer of the realm.

Distinctions persist, of course. The average member of the upper or middle classes still feels inclined to apologize if he buys a ready-made suit of clothes instead of going to his own tailor; and the code as regards clothing to be worn for sport remains strict. You may not play tennis in dark trousers, nor golf in white ones. Evening dress is obligatory in certain hotels and restaurants and at the opera. But in many of these last ditches of conservatism the dinner jacket has ousted the tail coat, while in the majority of good restaurants and theaters as many lounge suits are seen as dress suits.

Probably the explanation of this evolution is two-fold. The post-war mentality does not find it so essential as it used to be that a man's station in life should be expressed by his clothes. And while, on the one hand, the purveyor of ready-made clothes has greatly improved his technique, on the other hand the member of the upper class retains no great desire to wear uncomfortable clothes if they are no longer really distinctive. Finally, in many cases, he no longer can afford the extensive wardrobe necessitated by the old subdivisions of clothes into their suitability for particular occasions.

So much, then, for one of the old criteria! It might be remarked in passing that this leveling-up or leveling-

down process has as yet been more apparent among men than among women. Whether or not the average Englishwoman chooses her clothes unsuitably or wears them badly is a question upon which opinions differ greatly; but there can be no gainsaying the fact that the English shopgirl or stenographer possesses not a fraction of that flair for style which seems inherent in her American prototype. It is true that London which, before the war, was frequently described as a "man's town," is now rather more of a woman's. But although Oxford Street offers for shillings replicas of the frocks obtainable in Bond Street for guineas, there still exists a very great difference in the effect they produce upon the beholder.

There seems also to have taken place a reapportionment of the clothes budget in the family incomes of the upper classes; at least, the better tailors insist bitterly that there has. An American writing of England in 1909 declared roundly that "the Englishwoman is awkwardly clothed because well-fitting clothes of fine material are expensive, and she is not given her appropriate share of the income for purposes of personal adornment";¹ and he noted that "the shops wear the colors of the predominant sex. Should you take the trouble to count you would find that purveyors to masculine taste largely predominate. The men dress, the women are clothed, and the shops are provided accordingly. . . . The male bird has the brilliant plumage. The best of them, as one sees them in Piccadilly, in Bond Street, in St. James's Street, in the clubs, in the park on a Sun-

¹ "England and the English," by Price Collier.

day after church, are fine-looking fellows, well set up and scrupulously well groomed and turned out. But the women! What hats, what clothes, what shoes, what colors, what amorphous figures! . . . The grotesque costumes of the women would make one stop and stare, were it not that they are so common one ceases at last to notice them."

One has but to walk through any shopping street to-day to realize how hopelessly "dated" is this opinion of 1909. The male bird no longer wears the brilliant plumage; he pays for the female's!

III

The domiciliary revolution has not extended as far as the sartorial one. One is not any longer necessarily beyond the pale unless he lives in Mayfair or Belgravia; but the desire to reside in those districts still makes it possible for enormous rents to be charged there. Outside of London, the cost of housing tends to depend rather more on the accommodation secured than upon the social prestige attaching to particular districts. At the same time the old routine of the "town house" as it existed before the war is fast disappearing. The cost of maintaining one of the huge mansions in the West End to-day is fantastic. These great piles were built when service was cheap and plentiful; when rates and taxes were one-fourth what they now are; when every other essential of housekeeping from food to coal was cheap; and when the income tax was comparatively nothing. And they were not built so that they could be run by skimping. Their huge rooms, their manifold stairs and

passages, their basement kitchens—these called for legions of servants to keep them in order.

Theirs was an era which will not come again. Some of them, such as Devonshire House, Grosvenor House, Dorchester House, have been torn down and the names perpetuated in luxury hotels raised upon their sites. A few, such as Dudley House and Londonderry House, are retained by very wealthy families. Others have been turned into clubs, insurance offices, or the headquarters of other businesses; but very many of them stand dusty and untenanted, too big to be lived in by their former owners, too spaciously constructed to be converted profitably into flats. Probably demolition or conversion into business premises is the fate reserved for most of them. Already commerce has overflowed St. James's Square and Cavendish Square, and is attacking such holy-of-holies as Grosvenor and Berkeley squares, to say nothing of the streets of Mayfair.

Where are their former inhabitants? Not a few of them are buried from Boulogne to Baghdad. Those who survive have moved into smaller houses or service flats. Sometimes they even live over the garages into which their old stables have been converted.

Even more generally have the great country houses been disposed of. They have become schools, or asylums, or hotels. Sometimes, incidentally, it seems that their passing is regretted less by their former owners than by those to whom they stood as symbols of an order; hence one finds no less a democrat than Mr. Henry Nevinson lamenting "the dignified beauty of the old houses themselves, whether Elizabethan, Queen

Anne, or Georgian. It is unreasonable, but their conversion into public institutions or madhouses seems to diminish their ancient charm; and though utility gains, it is no satisfaction to me to meet a schoolmaster or a keeper of lunatics wandering in the park rather than a shepherd or a keeper of March hares.” *

IV

Alterations such as those described above in habits of wearing apparel and residence are, of course, only symptomatic of the inescapable fact that, although the upper class still is relatively the richest in the State, its absolute wealth has dwindled alarmingly. Any income of over £450 a year in England is taxed at the basic rate of 25 per cent for direct national income tax alone. Supertax, as already noted, begins at £2,000. It rises in a graduated scale until the recipient of an income of £50,000 or more must pay out in this one tax three-fifths of all he receives. Coincident with this period of heavy taxation there has been one of diminishing returns from invested capital. Large new fortunes were made during the war, but they did not greatly benefit the classes whose savings were largely placed in presumably safe, if unimaginative, securities of the so-called “trustee” class. “Consols” were once considered as safe as any earthly obligation; yet the 2½ per cent issue has not, since the war, sold above 60. Australian and Indian bonds stand at a heavy discount; the preference stocks of the home railways have, in some cases, lost nearly all their capital value, while the obligations of

* “Rough Islanders,” p. 53.

the staple industries such as shipping, textile manufacturing, the heavy iron and steel trade, and coal mining have stood for some years at consistently low prices.

Mr. Stanley Baldwin, whose name is borne by a famous firm of iron manufacturers, has told the public with complete candor that for every shilling he possessed at the end of the war he had in 1930 something less than a penny. His experience is by no means an isolated one. Moreover, such savage death duties are payable to the State that the transfer of an estate twice or thrice within a decade through a series of deaths may serve for all practical purposes to do away with it.

v

With the loss of financial power has inevitably gone a loss of political prestige. When there were only two parties in the country it did not very much matter whether one were Liberal or Conservative. Politics was rather an affair of ins and outs and people of very much the same type alternated in office. As long as parliamentary service was unpaid and the franchise restricted, the poor man was bound to be a rarity at St. Stephen's.

This system of caste rule lingers to a certain extent in the upper ranks of the civil, military, and diplomatic services, however much at any given moment these services may be under the domination of Socialist Cabinet Ministers. It exists with varying strength in the professions and the Church, scarcely at all in commerce and the arts and sciences. But it can set the tone for the nation's politics only as far as it is willing to

compromise on essentials for the sake of maintaining the trappings of power. The upper classes, for instance, were mostly opposed to the creation of the Irish Free State, which they dubbed surrender; to the limitation of the British Navy by treaty; to the funding of the war debt to America. But they were as powerless to prevent these things as they were to avoid the payment of unemployment relief or of their own high taxes.

Yet to-day the real upper class, not merely the hunting, fishing, racing, dancing people who make up so much of Society with a capital "S," is by no means wholly reactionary in its philosophy. It is adapting itself to changed conditions, admitting sometimes that the lower classes are human and very like itself in essentials. Many qualities formerly associated with the pre-war conception of the upper class, such as selfishness, intolerance, distrust of "cleverness" or intelligence, excessive devotion to sport, inhibited modes of speech and expression, and a hidebound mental outlook, to-day might be sought more profitably in the lower levels of the middle class. The peer and the proletarian, after all, understand each other better than they do the middle class, or than the middle class ever will understand either. Both are, in a sense, gamblers with life, the one having much to lose and the other much to gain. The middle class, having a little to lose, prefers to take no chances for the sake of a little gain.

There are still a few fine old Tory gentlemen, colloquially known as the Diehards, who have learned nothing and forgotten nothing. They are the English Bourbons. They continue to go through the motions as

though nothing had happened since 1914. They believe in the Church of England, the superiority of the British Navy, the relegation of the working class to its proper place, and the infallibility of the British Constitution. They frankly distrust democracy, free education, relaxation of any of the pre-war taboos on adultery, divorce, or changes in the Portland Club laws, and all foreigners. They are magnificent in their disregard of actuality, and the wider public regards them with amused tolerance.

VI

But if this class has been forced to abandon its dictatorship of the national destiny, it has at least succeeded in maintaining intact no inconsiderable part of the façade of national life. The lower classes may copy its clothes, but they still copy and do not originate. All the way up to Court circles this tendency holds good; it was not Lady Astor, but Mr. J. H. Thomas who was embarrassed when the American-born peeress hissed into the Labor politician's ear, as he stood in Court dress awaiting the arrival of his Majesty, "For Heaven's sake pull up your socks!" Mr. Arthur Henderson, almost as soon as he became Foreign Secretary in the second Labor Cabinet, began to imitate the stateliness of the late Lord Curzon. The wildest of wild men from the Clydeside create scenes in Parliament, but their subsequent apologies to Mr. Speaker are quite genuine; and there remain only a few ineffective veterans to remember with a smile that the Labor Left Wingers' antics are tame compared with those of the blue

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bloods during, for instance, the Irish troubles of 1912-14.

Indeed, foreign observers during the post-war period have been known cynically to murmur, "*Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.*" But they are wrong; it is by no means the same thing. They have been confused by the age-old dislike of the Englishman of allowing any fact to stand forth in its naked rawness. Mr. Henderson's foreign policy proved to be far more intelligent than his Tory predecessor's, and not all the Labor politicians who obediently clothe their legs in satin knickers at Court vote Tory at the next election.

Consciously or unconsciously, the people who direct Britain's fortunes at the present day have sensed that in the life of the upper classes there was, and is, much that is of value; much, the loss of which would be deplorable. Admitted that the pre-war upper class existed only at the cost of much human inequality, or even human misery; admitted, also, that certain members of it were distinguished mainly by their sheer genius at wasting. The fact remains that it was capable of turning out a product which, at its best, was superior to anything else in the world and that, among its rank and file, it inculcated many qualities for the possession of which no race or class would be the poorer.

Some of these—such as self-control, honesty, and the spirit of fair play—have become proverbially applicable to Englishmen far beyond the confines of the class which, for whatever reason, first developed them. Of course it may be argued that the upper class was so fortunately situated that there was no reason why these

qualities should not have been developed; alternatively, that they are no monopoly of England's. Yet it is *palabra de ingles* that the South American chooses as a phrase when he wishes to emphasize that he is telling the literal truth; and it was as much this feeling of keeping an implied bargain as it was anything else that led the people generally to approve the effort to restore the pound sterling to its old value after the war when other currencies were being revalued through expediency or necessity.

Likewise the traditional devotion to sport and travel is surely "all to the good," while the Englishman's demand for the greatest possible measure of individual political freedom set the standard for most of the world's pre-war parliaments and gave rise to a system of judicature which still is regarded as a model. Only in that Shakespeare created him four hundred years ago is the Lord Chief Justice in "Henry IV" medieval. His prototypes exist to-day.

The upper class also gained through the fact that it was not kept as an exclusive caste. It is true that the seats of the mighty were closely preserved, but they were not impregnable and a continual process of recruitment took place. In the eighteenth century the profiteers of the Marlborough campaigns were looked down upon by the old nobility which was secure in its possession of lands confiscated from the Church two centuries earlier. By Napoleonic times these profiteers themselves had become the old nobility, and were frowned upon by the parvenus who supplied and financed Wellington's armies. By 1919 the descendants

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of the Napoleonic profiteers were sneering at the *nouveaux riches* of the World War. Each class in turn inherited the lands, the houses, the servants, the pictures, and—more important than all of these—the public obligations of its predecessor, so that there was produced an illusion of complete continuity where in fact no such continuity existed.

In a world in which the first serious challenge to individualism for some centuries had come only with the French Revolution, and in which it was to hang fire for another century or more before culminating in the growth of collectivism which found final expression in the Russian Revolution, the English upper class flourished greatly. It was the development of the machine, and the profit to be extracted from the machine, that finally established sheer wealth as one of the passports into this class and made it possible for the Victorian manufacturer and the Jewish financier to pass into the House of Lords.

It was also this machine-dominated world which made possible the enormous expansion of the population in the nineteenth century, and which still further increased the numerical disparity between the Haves and the Have-nots. Between 1800 and 1900 the upper class increased to nothing like the same extent as did the proletariat. And between the years 1914 and 1918 that proletariat reached the decision that it was no longer meet that the greater proportion of the national income should remain in the hands of a small fraction of the population.

This decision marked the beginning of the end for

the old upper class. In this generation it is selling off its homes, its lands, its art treasures, and its securities; in the next it will be increasingly forced back upon what it can earn by its own individual endeavors.

Nevertheless, with all its manifold faults, this class has "deserved well of the State," and never more so than during the war years when it gave life and property without stint in defense of all that it held most precious. Its virtues as well as its shortcomings were on the grand scale; it supplied color and interest in a world becoming increasingly drab and monotonous; it civilized, whether or not the underlying motive was merely one of gain, and in its passing, or at least its metamorphosis, there figures no rumble of tumbrils or rattle of machine guns, but sometimes even a reluctant salute from those who are speeding it on its way.

CHAPTER V

I

DURING the half century preceding the war the English middle class gained steadily in numbers, influence, and wealth. For the greater part of this time the middle class shared with the upper class the responsibility for the direction of national policy, and in 1911 it made an effective bid for sole responsibility by forcing legislation, drastically curtailing the powers of the House of Lords. But 1911 saw the high-water mark of its prestige. The curve ran level for a few years, began to decline before the war had ended, and during the post-war decade continued to move steadily downward.

In the pre-war years the standards, ideals, and customs of the middle class were those from which the great majority of foreigners formed their estimates of the British people. The middle class traveled as extensively as, and in far greater numbers than, the upper class. It was highly articulate, controlled most of the press, and produced most of the writers whose works were read abroad. Politically speaking, the middle class during the late Victorian, Edwardian, and early Georgian reigns was moving gradually from Conservatism to Liberalism, but it remained stoutly individualist. Financially speaking, it flourished.

Then, as now, the middle class was largely made up

of non-manual workers, with a considerable proportion of *rentiers* on a modest scale. It included the greater proportion of the officers of the fighting services and the merchant marine; of the professional men; of the clergymen and educators; of agriculturists who were not small holders or cottagers; and, naturally, of the manufacturers, traders, and bankers.

A range of £150 to £1,500 a year would have included the incomes of perhaps 90 per cent of this class; and if these figures seem to our post-war appraisal incredibly low it must be remembered that the cost of living in England before the war was comparatively much farther below that of to-day than index numbers of wholesale prices would seem to indicate. And, indeed, similar figures for the present day might well be set at £250 to £2,500. Individual incomes, of course, were, and are, slightly lower than the average low figure for the group, and very much higher than the average upper limit.

No other class of the English, or perhaps, for that matter, of any other nation, has been more exhaustively studied, analyzed, praised, reproached, explained, and generally documented. Consider for a moment the subjects chosen by half a dozen fiction writers whose names have been household words during the last thirty years. Galsworthy and Shaw have concentrated upon the upper middle class at home; Kipling followed and observed overseas; Wells and Bennett took the lower middle class for their province, time and again; while Barrie spun webs of fantasy about the doings of more or less the same people.

There emerges from the books of these masters, and from a whole library turned out by the lesser fry, a fairly recognizable picture; yet it has not ceased to baffle many intelligent students in other countries. The trouble, of course, arises mainly from a confusion of nomenclature. An action which one man may interpret as bravery may, by others, be considered foolhardiness or wanting in imagination; a speech which in England is considered frank and unequivocal, to the inhabitants of some other countries may seem insincere and full of guile.

II

There are certain generalizations about both the pre-war and post-war middle classes which can be ventured upon. Thus, the middle class did, and does, pride itself upon the possession of those qualities mentioned in the previous chapter as widely found in the upper class—honesty, fair play, and self-control. The middle class has perhaps had less reason to adopt these characteristics on purely pragmatic grounds than has the upper. But they have been dinned into it by its schools, its churches, and its newspapers until this class has come to believe implicitly that such virtues are inherent rather than acquired. Forty years ago Shaw could flutter the dovecotes by such a phrase as "In this age, when every man's character is rotted to the core by the effort to become a gentleman"; to-day, if a magistrate or a bishop or a prime minister wishes to invoke the absolute condemnation of conduct, he pronounces the horrible doom that someone or something is "un-English." For

ten years I have been collecting examples of the use of this phrase; the best one I have come across is a reference to "this revolting and most un-English murder." I am not quite certain what constitutes a simon-pure, all-English murder; but I live in hope of finding out.

An Englishman might justifiably report that whatever the distinguishing features of an all-British murder might be, one of them certainly would be its comparative infrequency of occurrence. And indeed the translation into terms of specific actions of not only the qualities mentioned above, but of cognate ones, such as respect for law, fairly certain and swift justice, is bound to result in a high degree of public order. It also has been held to result in a tendency to take one's pleasures sadly!

But in the post-war world difficulties arise when it comes to the application of such simple rules of conduct in reaction to an environment far less comfortingly stable than the Victorian. The member of the middle class may consider that the Indian Nationalists, or the Labor Party, are not playing the game; but if the other fellow refuses to recognize the rules of the game, where are you then?

The middle class as a unit ever has been prone to substitute convictions for intelligence; to hold "cleverness" at a discount and to distrust a nimble mind. Since the Armistice it has become increasingly difficult for it to maintain this tendency in the face of repeated shocks to complacency. The first reaction of this class, when it began to perceive that the realities of the new world failed to correspond to its preconceived opinions, was

to ignore the realities and stick to preconceptions. The tendency persists and is reflected in such organs of middle-class opinion as the *Daily Mail* and *Daily Express*; but the number of people who are reluctantly deciding to admit the existence of sordid realities grows apace. Often the very admission is unconscious and sometimes it is even accompanied by a vehement denial of any admission at all. It is this combination, when it occurs, that makes the French talk of "*Albion perfide*" and the Americans of "British hypocrisy." The reproach is unjust, because it really does not occur to the Englishman that his words and actions might be found contradictory by other peoples.

It requires only the application of a few very simple touchstones to demonstrate how greatly the attitude of the middle class has shifted. Take, for instance, the pre-war and post-war reactions in questions of religion, sexual morality, patriotism. If religion is to be interpreted in terms of churchgoing or church membership, the middle-class Englishman of to-day has far less of it than he had in 1914. Both the established and Non-conformist branches share in the growing unpopularity of formal worship. Roman Catholicism seems better able to hold its own, but it will not do so very long if papal encyclicals continue to present Socialism and Christianity as incompatible. And the recent quarrel between High and Low churchmen (the Prayer Book controversy) seemed to thousands of people an inexplicable throwback to medieval standards of dispute over dogma and doctrine. It also brought disestablishment almost within the realm of practical politics.

It should not be inferred that the façade of religious observance has not been maintained. George V is still "Fid. Def." (Defender of the Faith). There is still a Bench of Bishops in the House of Lords; and it is still possible for a campaign of hate against Russia to be worked up on the pretext of the Soviets' atheistic philosophy. On the other hand, it is questionable whether there is any deep significance in the facts noted above. It is not necessary to bring the charge that the principles of Christianity are not observed in everyday life, because they are not so observed in any professedly Christian nation. The point, as far as Britain is concerned, is that the power of the Church to influence the thoughts and actions of the people has unquestionably diminished. Not for some centuries has the Church in England taken so active a part in politics as is kept up by religious bodies in the United States; nor in recent times has any national election centered so largely about an issue of religion as did, for instance, the presidential election of 1928. The famous Non-conformist conscience has but little in common with Fundamentalism of the American brand; and when the "unco guid" do mobilize for a display of political bigotry they meet stiff opposition.

A little incident illustrative of this took place in 1931. Although the London theaters do not open on Sunday, chiefly because of the objection of the actors to a seven-day week, the motion-picture houses do. For more than thirty years certain Sunday performances have been licensed by the London County Council. Early in 1931 a decision of the High Court made it

plain that the L. C. C. unwittingly had been flouting certain ancient blue laws which nobody had ever thought worth while expunging from the statute books. While, on the one hand, some hundreds of informations were laid against the cinema proprietors by a crop of "common informers," on the other Parliament was asked to rush through legislation legalizing the position which had been in fact existing for many years. At once the forces of intolerance were rallied; members of Parliament were circularized; petitions were drawn up; in fact, there ensued a process not unlike some that are quite familiar to Americans. But the press flatly refused to co-operate; and certain liberal-minded parliamentarians, in studying the ancient blue laws in question, made the useful discovery that not only did these laws prohibit Sunday performances, but that they also forbade the practice on the Sabbath of practically every activity indulged in by our twentieth-century civilization.

"Very well," they said in effect, "go ahead and reject the Sunday opening bill. But be assured that if you do we shall have every one of you, personally, in court within a month because you have traveled, or played golf, or bought newspapers, or done any one of a dozen other things, on Sundays!"

The Sunday opening bill was passed.

In the same year the public learned with distinct surprise that the goods and chattels of certain East Anglian farmers had been distrained upon and were to be sold for nonpayment of ecclesiastical tithes or taxes. Here again there was no doubt about the legal position. But

on the day appointed for the sale the would-be purchasers seemed to have developed curious ideas of value. The highest bid that could be obtained for horses was one of a few shillings; kitchen utensils were bid for in pence. Inasmuch as the sale had to take place, the goods were knocked down for these farcical figures; sums averaging about £5 were secured for the discharge of claims twenty times as great; and the farmers were promptly handed their property back again.

It should be said on behalf of the Church of England that, while it may prosecute for its rights in the case of ecclesiastical taxes, which are, after all, well-defined obligations, it lags far behind the Nonconformist churches in political intolerance. During the days of its political power the Established Church was, of course, a pillar of conservatism. To-day its brand of conservatism has been softened and humanized, but, even so, the magic of its old appeal is gone. Nonconformist ideals still exercise considerable influence in the Labor and Liberal parties; the Church of England finds it increasingly difficult to lay down the law, to collect funds, and to draw its communicants into its churches.

Even the persistence of the English Sunday, despite the open cinemas, as a day of intolerable dullness to the foreigner is probably due less to any active resistance to reform on the part of the Church than to apathy among the populace at large. The average member of the middle classes does not, in fact, have such a thin time on Sunday; he plays golf or tennis, motors to the country, and otherwise disports himself except when it is raining, as it usually is—a condition about which, un-

fortunately, nothing can be done by statute. Because his recreation is taken individually he does not greatly lament the fact that public recreation of various kinds is nonexistent and does not care particularly whether there is a law about it or not.

III

Both the attitude of the churches and the present state of the law lag far behind the middle-class standards in sexual matters. This is particularly marked as regards the divorce question. England's divorce laws are still archaic and operate to the general effect that a divorce shall not be granted if both husband and wife desire it. There should, in the eyes of the law, be an injured party; and thus the collusive divorce, in which an artificially injured party is provided, has come to be the rule rather than the exception. The procedure is simple, and even old-fashioned to the extent that it is almost invariably the husband who figures as the guilty one. . . . The wife writes a formal letter asking her husband to reinstate her in his affections. The husband replies, equally formally, that it is impossible. He then shares for a night a room in a Brighton hotel with a young woman who is not his wife; is providentially discovered with her by a waiter or chambermaid the next morning; and on the presumption of adultery thereby established the marriage is dissolved. But even this does not carry the farce to its end, for there is maintained out of the public funds an official known as the King's Proctor, whose duty it is to ferret out and make known any collusion that he may discover before

the divorce is made absolute; and if he can establish the fact that both husband and wife wanted a divorce so badly that they were willing to co-operate in getting it, the decree *nisi* naturally is revoked! (It may be of interest to students of social philosophy that the young woman who accompanies the husband to a hotel not infrequently is of impeccable virtue and that she would be highly offended if the gentleman sharing her room should, in fact, make amorous advances to her.)

Every judge, every member of Parliament, and every individual who has bothered to think about it knows that a great proportion of the divorces granted nowadays have been illegally obtained. But the public has simply ceased to be shocked at the suggestion that incompatible partners to a marriage should desire to terminate a living hypocrisy; and, since the process is really not difficult and revolting only to people of unreasonable sensitiveness (who can easily find worse things at which to revolt), the law and the Church are flouted just as the Prohibition laws are flouted in the United States. The difference is that once your boot-legged English divorce has been made absolute, you are sure of its genuineness, which is seldom the case with American liquor.

A somewhat similar situation obtains in respect to birth control. It is true that in England the sale of contraceptives is both legal and open and that it was no less reputable a journal than the stanchly Tory *Morning Post* which, a few years ago, said of the modern Englishwoman that "she Stopes to conquer." But there is continual bickering as to whether birth-

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control information should be disseminated by government-aided doctors or hospitals; and the latest pronouncement of the Church of England on the matter seems to boil down to a recommendation that the utilization of contraceptives should be preceded by prayer. Here, again, the fact is that in the upper and middle classes the practice of birth control is all but universal.

On the wider question of general sex morality the attitude of the middle classes has not relaxed as much as might have been expected. It may be recalled that immediately after the war many predictions were made that the "surplus women" problem inevitably must lead to promiscuity. But there is no trustworthy evidence that this has been the case; and it is certain that there are still many hundreds of thousands of middle-class people who would tend to apply the adjective of "fallen," or at the very least of "unfortunate," to a woman known to have sought the consolations of sexual intercourse without prior sanctification. None the less it is equally certain that legalized prostitution is non-existent in England and that street solicitation, even in London, does not attain a fraction of its pre-war proportions. Whether the reason is to be sought in increased self-control, the post-war slump in wealth, or the development of a more cunning amateur technique is a question that would be very difficult to answer.

IV

On "patriotism" as such it is also difficult to generalize because of the infinite possibilities of elastic definition. For instance, during the war very few people

considered either Mr. Ramsay MacDonald or Mr. Philip Snowden as patriots, yet to-day few would impugn their standing on that ground. But it is quite safe to assert that the old, conventional, flag-waving, "my-country-right-or-wrong" type of patriotism to-day stands at a heavy discount, even among the middle classes where formerly it was most prevalent. It may be said that this is only a natural and inevitable phase of post-war disillusionment and that within a few years it would be easy again to work up the populace to war point against Jugo-Slav atrocities, or the Chilean menace, or the Eskimo peril. I frankly doubt whether this is accurate. After four years of the last war and a decade of so-called victory the average Englishman has had enough to convince him that war is a mug's game.

Even in the 'nineties Sir W. S. Gilbert could amuse his audiences by satirizing, as in "Ruddigore," the excess patriotism of the Napoleonic period. Nevertheless the audiences who laughed so heartily at the magnanimity of the tars who "had pity on the poor Parley-Voo" within a few years were showering coins down on the stage when sentimental actresses recited "The Absent-Minded Beggar."

It also may be pointed out that English patriotism tends to be inarticulate, an emotion deeply held rather than facilely expressed. Granted; granted also that in a war of self-defense England to-day would have no trouble in raising armies. The point is that it would be a great deal harder now to make out to the middle class a case for a defensive war (all wars are defensive in

the minds of those who start them) than it was in 1914. Experience has taught too bitter a lesson. Too many of the younger generation who did not personally experience the war have read not only the recent crop of war literature ("All Quiet," et cetera); but such books, much more impressive to the English mind, as Arthur Ponsonby's "Falsehoods in War Time" and C. E. Montague's "Disenchantment." The middle class no longer trusts so implicitly as it did its newspapers or its spiritual or political advisors. In fact it is, at least on this subject, beginning to think!

v

In the county of London limitations of available space impose upon the middle class the necessity of living to a considerable extent in apartment houses. Outside the metropolitan area and throughout the rest of the country the Englishman clings fiercely to his individual house and, if possible, to a bit of garden as well. Throughout the rural regions most of the houses have been weathered into harmony with the countryside and seem to form an integral part of the scene. Near the cities, however, the post-war housing program has brought into being row upon row of glaringly new and, for the most part, ugly, small dwellings.

It is the triumph of mediocrity. These houses, in addition to sprawling without plan or vision across ever-increasing areas of the countryside, are uneconomic and not particularly comfortable. Even as recently as ten years ago it was possible to find within a few miles of central London country lanes bordered by great old

trees, mellowed cottages, and houses—oases of peace and repose. But year by year that great human reservoir which is London slops over into the home counties. The country lane becomes an arterial road and the old trees are uprooted and destroyed. Fringes of “ignobly decent” residences begin to line the new roads; a local shopping center springs up; side roads begin to put out from the main thoroughfares and, finally, the “development” stretches until it merges with a neighboring one which has been putting forth similar tentacles. The final phase is an infinity of pink tiles and stucco which resolves, upon closer inspection, into an endless duplication of little houses which, for their uniformity and their numbers, might strike the fanciful as the spawn of some great super, semi-detached *bijou* which had paused in a flight over the country.

Now, when it is too late, there is much talk of regional planning and ordered development. The land that might have been saved at least for parks or recreation grounds is covered with row upon row of houses, honeycombed with drains and gas and electric conduits; and the whole affair has defeated its own purpose, since the people who move ever farther away from central London for fresh air and open views find their fresh air vitiated and their views obstructed because thousands of their fellow citizens have participated in the rush to do likewise.

While the homes of the middle class naturally vary enormously in beauty, practicality, comfort, and cost, great numbers of them share well-defined characteristics. On the ground floor they have a dining room,

a "drawing" room, and a kitchen. On the floor above there are three or four bedrooms and a bathroom. Central heating still is almost as unknown as is the presence of refrigerators. Individual coal fires and gas stoves furnish occasional warmth, but the majority of English homes are cold in winter and damp the year round.

However, there are consolations. Most middle-class people still find it possible to keep one servant, at least; and though their houses may be damp, their dietary restricted, and their food poorly cooked, their household work performed laboriously and inefficiently by hand, they are masters and employers of labor; and have the great advantage of being able to send the milkman and the butcher's boy around to the tradesmen's entrance to deliver their goods.

VI

And of course it does not occur to the middle class that its domestic life merits pity, for the average Englishman quite sincerely pities the American who must endure central heating instead of open fires, and iced beverages instead of lukewarm ones. With this, as a matter of taste, there can be no quarrel. But the confused, poorly organized, and needlessly expensive régime of the middle-class household also is projected into the wider spheres of life where, whatever its inherent merits or demerits, it is increasingly unable to compete with the foreigner's way of doing things.

I know that the Englishman's seeming habit of muddling through sometimes produces surprisingly efficient results, but not always, as a few homely instances may suffice to show.

Some years ago an American had occasion to purchase a new house near London. The house naturally required supplies of water, gas, and electricity. One day a trench was dug from the main road; workmen came and fiddled about with pipes and tiles, filled in the trench, and departed. A few days later the performance was repeated and within another week it happened yet a third time. But when, for the fourth occasion, excavations began the American's curiosity got the better of him and he asked the builder what it was all about. The reply was that the inspector from the Water Board had come to examine the installation. It was intimated that inspectors from the gas and electric companies would follow in due course.

"But," the American expostulated, "that will mean six times that your workmen will have excavated and filled in these trenches. Why not dig one trench for all three services, instal them, and fill it in after having the three inspectors simultaneously pass their verdicts?"

The builder turned a cold and baleful eye upon him.

"We never do it like that," he replied stiffly.

Again, an American architect was supervising the erection of an office building in the City. One day he arrived on the scene to find the workmen in full swing of getting the ferro-concrete floors in place.

"But, my God! You haven't left any openings for the pipes!" he expostulated.

"Surely," the contractor pointed out gently, "you aren't forgetting that we can drill through the concrete after it sets!"

Such isolated incidents can be multiplied a hundred and a thousandfold until they become all too typical. It

is not fair to blame them all upon the middle class, nor to suggest that it is the vaguely "classical" but largely impractical education conferred by middle-class schools that is solely responsible. Some of the sillier anomalies in English life arise from trade-union restrictions; from the greed or lack of vision of upper-class *entrepreneurs*; from the failure to repeal obsolete laws, and from a multitude of other causes. None the less the middle classes, immobile, imperturbable, distrustful of innovation, and their philosophy of vague optimism about muddling through, cannot be wholly exonerated.

VII

This "vague optimism," by the way, is not to be found on the surface of middle-class life. While in his heart the average Englishman has not even a corner reserved for the notion that the country is going to the dogs, he likes to say that it is. A gentle pessimism has ever been a convention of English thought and speech. For centuries there has been someone who always could find an audience for his warnings that soon it would be time for England to put up the shutters as a nation. Perhaps because these warnings have never yet been justified the Englishman feels that all will be well as long as the prophecies of disaster continue to be forthcoming as usual.

In this connection there is interest in the phrases which make up the small coin of middle-class speech, the salutations and catchwords which one uses without thinking. Instead of "Fine," or "Very well, thank you," the reply of the Englishman to the convention-

alized "How are you?" is "Mustn't complain" or "Not too bad." No Englishman, other than an Americanized one, ever says that he is glad to meet you. Similarly "Not bad" becomes a term of high commendation, especially among business men, who are even more prone than their prototypes in other countries to refuse to admit that business is ever, under any circumstances, doing well.

To emphasize the keynote of moderation there is the immortal episode of the counterfeiter of Wimbledon, who did indeed depart from orthodoxy in one respect, but who otherwise might almost have been selected as representative of that class which, we are sometimes assured, is the backbone of the nation. This gentleman's eccentricity consisted in the fact that he found it simpler to manufacture his own treasury notes than to secure them by more conventional methods. He was both thorough and expert. Thousands of his £1 notes circulated and even passed the scrutiny of the Bank of England; they were virtually indistinguishable from the genuine ones. It was a thoughtless minor error which eventually tripped him up. (He is now spending seven years as a guest of one of his Majesty's prisons, which is neither here nor there.) But when he was arraigned for trial, this singular fact emerged—that, with the world at his feet, with the practicability of passing his notes safely proved beyond the shadow of a doubt, he had manufactured for years just thirty £1 notes every week. It further developed that in Wimbledon, which is a well-to-do suburb of London, he was regarded as (and indeed was) a model citizen. He wore a black coat,

striped trousers, and a bowler hat; he carried an attaché case and an umbrella to his train in the mornings; he paid his income tax regularly, contributed to local charities, and, presumably, voted the Conservative ticket. In fact, the only irregularity in his life was his too individualistic method of making money. He explained in court that he was not constitutionally given to ostentation; his needs were nicely taken care of on £30 a week; so why, he inquired, should he have made more than that?

VIII

In this attitude he was typical of his class, which is only to a very minor degree infected with the restless desire for self-betterment obtaining in the corresponding class in the United States. The average middle-class Englishman is very largely devoid of "hustle" or "pep," or whatever else that quality may be termed. He carries no field marshal's baton in his attaché case. His attitude toward the primary necessity of his life—the business of making a living—is characterized by little enthusiasm. He may like his work, or regard it as a necessary evil; but he seldom permits it, as the American does, to figure in his thoughts as the central fact of his existence. In so far as he assumes at all that the future will hold better prospects for him, he usually takes it for granted that advancement will come naturally in the course of years and not as a result of extra exertion on his own part. It should be remarked here that this attitude is fostered by the dislike on the part of many English employers of any display of origin-

ality by their subordinates. There are millions of Englishmen who have no expectation of a "future," in the economic sense, but who are not noticeably uneasy or resentful on this account. The majority of them have not thought it out for themselves; but when one does so he usually arrives at a conclusion something like this:

"At present I make enough money to live in reasonable comfort; and of course I fancy Uncle George will do something for me in his will. Meanwhile, suppose I were to buckle down to the grindstone and work like billy-o for five years? So and So and This and That are senior to me in the office. They'd think I was trying to undermine them and, naturally, they'd be disposed to make it unpleasant for me. Besides, what guarantee should I have that my employer wouldn't simply cash in on my extra work and do nothing about it? Or that he wouldn't import somebody from outside, some friend or some friend's son, and leave me as the faithful wheel horse that did all the work? No, thanks; it's a mug's game."

Naturally this gives only one side of the picture. There are thousands of middle-class youths who are taking courses at night school, or working overtime, or fiddling with inventions, all animated with the desire to better their economic status. But they are not typical. The goal of life throughout a great section of the middle class is retirement at sixty or, at most, sixty-five upon an assured pension or income. This makes jobs with pension prospects more attractive than those with higher pay in the immediate present but with no

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guarantees for the distant future; and government jobs never go begging.

Endowment life insurance is more popular in England than it is anywhere else, a statement which not only can be justified by statistics, but which a moment's comparison of insurance advertisements in England and America will substantiate. In the United States the appeal consists in variations upon the theme that life is uncertain and that one ought to provide for one's dependents. In England it centers about depicting the ease with which one can provide for one's own retirement at sixty or so and thereafter exist in blissful idleness interspersed by golf or bee-keeping.

The American observer is apt to jump to the conclusion that such a philosophy of life is a sort of defeatism, a confession of failure before the race starts. It is at least arguable that "realism" might be a more accurate description. Never at any time have the opportunities in England for a young man on the make been so great as they were during the last century in the United States. Even during the Victorian period of prosperity the supply of labor in England was greater than the demand and, consequently, it was not necessary for the industrialist or the merchant to distribute to his workers so great a proportion of his gains as it was in the United States. Except as regards coal, England even then had no untapped reservoirs of natural wealth.

To-day the middle-class Englishman may not consciously perceive that the delicate machinery by which the English economy continues to function is somewhat out of gear. Nevertheless he feels it subconsciously;

he knows that a dozen men wait to fill his shoes should he strike out for himself, and he perceives that the tendency of taxation in England for the next generation will be to prevent the accumulation of great fortunes. On the other hand he knows that security of professional tenure in England is comparatively high and that there is enjoyment (whether keen or tepid is a matter of individual temperament) to be had as day succeeds day; enjoyment which has nothing to do with the payment of supertax or the maintenance of a Rolls-Royce.

So he just "carries on."

CHAPTER VI

I

IN 1930 it was estimated (by the *Labour Year Book*) that while some 5,000,000 persons in Great Britain had incomes of over £160 per annum, only 2,150,000 were actually liable to the payment of income tax. Inasmuch as this tax was then assessed on incomes of over £160, it is obvious that 2,850,000 people received incomes of between £160 and the figure at which exemptions from the tax (such as marriage, family, and earned income allowances) ceased to become operative. Roughly speaking, this means that they received something less than £250 annually.

If one assumes the figure, which statistically is more or less correct, of 3.5 persons to a family, one finds that approximately 7,525,000 people in Britain, out of a population of 41,000,000, belong to the income-tax paying classes. Actually the number is probably somewhat smaller, because families in the higher income range are smaller than those of the poorer elements of the population.

If, then, the criterion of income is to be applied in the effort to define the lower classes, it appears that some 34,000,000 inhabitants of the British Isles, or approximately seven-eighths of the population, would come within this category. Because this class is naturally less

articulate than the others, and because it is not one with which (except in so far as it embraces servants, waiters, but conductors, and people in similar semi-public occupations) the average foreigner comes closely in contact, this figure may seem unduly large. On the other hand, when it is considered that by the autumn of 1931 nearly 3,000,000 people were drawing State unemployment pay ; that these represented, with their families, a total of at least 6,000,000 people ; that only certain definite classes of the population are eligible for unemployment relief ; and that early in 1931 it was estimated that 22 per cent of the registered working population was unemployed, it will be seen that the estimate is not far out.

II

Even this brief excursion into statistics serves to indicate the answer, if any be needed, to the question, "Who are the lower classes?" Clearly, such a proportion of the population as is outlined above must include the great bulk of manual workers : of factory employees, agricultural laborers, miners ; the staffs of such public utilities as railroads, the post office, and the gas and electric supply companies ; the rankers in the military services ; merchant seamen ; household and institutional servants ; and a considerable number of the personnel of the distributive trades, of retail establishments, and of business offices.

In this class, more than in the others, it can be said that the question of income is all important. The limits within which its incomes range are narrower than those for the middle and upper classes ; and it is rare that even

the exceptional posts, such as those of certain waiters, or highly skilled technicians engaged upon work of precision, or linotype operators yield more than £10 or £12 a week. An average family wage for the whole group would range between 50 and 80 shillings weekly.

Except in the case of "living-in" posts, this automatically conditions most of the lower classes' activities. It limits residence, food, clothing, and recreation to a comparatively narrow scope; it virtually guarantees that political support will be given to the party which professes to be willing to do most in the way of improving conditions for this class (in this case usually the Labor Party); and by extension, since there is now universal adult suffrage in England, it increasingly tends to establish the considerations which go to make up national policy.

III

The most important thing to be noted about the lower class is that its "class consciousness" scarcely exists in the sinister sense which the Russian Revolution has given to this phrase. Its demands, although persistent, are seldom if ever belligerent. The English temperament does not lend itself to the development of revolutionaries on any wholesale scale. The ideals of the working classes (as though the professional people did not work!) as they find expression in the program of the Labor Party are those of complete socialization of the British State. In actual fact they constitute an imperfectly and perhaps illogically formulated demand for a greater share of the national income than they

enjoy or have enjoyed since the war; they are almost completely unaccompanied by vindictiveness.

It is this, in the larger sense, immense tolerance that particularly characterizes the lower classes. Even to a lesser degree than in the middle classes do restlessness and ambition exist here. To uncounted millions of British workmen a reasonable state of things entire would consist in the enjoyment of what is, after all, a very narrow margin of safety in the economic sense. This granted, only an infinitesimal proportion would object if some eccentric millionaire should elect to bathe his lady friend in champagne, or would envy him his Rolls-Royce.

Food is comparatively cheap in England; rents are kept low by a continuance of the war-time restrictions; yet, for all that, the real wages of the British workman are unduly high in comparison with Continental standards, it cannot be said with any show of justification that his standard of life is high. His house or his apartment more often than not does not contain a separate bathroom; he seldom has electric light; such luxuries as electric household appliances, motor cars, or other mechanical trinkets are conspicuous by their absence. His dietary is restricted and one-sided: his very stature shows the effects, through several generations, of this and of his inadequate housing conditions.

It is true that there are compensations, albeit of a somewhat impersonal nature. If he falls out of work the government and his local authorities will see to it that he does not starve. If he falls ill the State pro-

vides free medical attention and insurance against loss of wages. There are old-age pensions and maternity benefits for him and for his wife, free education for his children; free libraries should he desire to read. Public transport is cheap and good; the prices of admission to football and cricket matches, to theaters and cinemas are so graded as to bring enjoyment of them within his reach. The price of beer, his favorite alcoholic drink, is kept low, as is also that of its non-alcoholic counterpart—tea. From his entry into the world to his exit from it, the proletarian may count upon public assistance.

IV

The obvious danger here is that he may count too much upon public assistance. The existence of much of England's social legislation, and particularly of the unemployment relief fund (popularly known as the "dole"), has at various times drawn forth the wrath of the majority of the non-dole-drawing classes. It has been alleged that the Englishman prefers doles to work; that there are men on the dole who keep motor cars and who winter in the south of France; that, in a word, it pays better to be idle in England than to work.

That the dole is abused goes without saying. There have even been whispers, too, that the biggest doles of all—the pensions drawn by retired Lord Chancellors—have not invariably produced that single-hearted devotion to the betterment of the Commonwealth that they are supposed to inspire. A more pertinent inquiry would be as to whether the dole abuses are so widespread as to

indict the whole system; or as to whether the system itself is vicious.

As far as the central government's payment of unemployment relief is concerned, the man is certainly a financial genius who can contrive to live upon it in luxury, or even in what the middle classes would term reasonable comfort.

During the summer of 1931, when the dole was as high as it ever had been except for one short period some years previously, the weekly payment to a single man was seventeen shillings. If he was married, and if his wife, not having been previously a wage-earner, was dependent upon him, he drew an additional nine shillings; and for each child, two shillings. Thus an unemployed man with a wife and two children was in receipt of thirty shillings (then \$7.50) a week. The basic allowance for an unemployed woman was fifteen shillings weekly; for youths and girls it was smaller. In October all payments were reduced approximately 10 per cent.

Now, although the price of food and clothing is lower in England than in the United States, and although the rents of lower-class homes are held down almost to pre-war level by prolongation of the Rent Restriction Act, thirty shillings is not a sufficient amount of money to enable a family to live luxuriously for a week. It is, as a matter of fact, just about enough to keep four people alive and reasonably adequately, although not particularly well, nourished. The dole, as a national standard of payment, is invariable and is awarded without reference to a man's previous remun-

eration. In certain areas the unemployed are allowed to supplement the government payment by additional relief from the local authorities. It is undeniable that in some of these areas, where the generosity of the Boards of Guardians outruns their discretion, relief payments to the unemployed were inexcusably over-extended; and that instances did exist of a man's being better off on the dole than if he had work.

For the rest, the abuses of the dole fall mainly into these categories :

1. The unemployed man (in this category often an "unemployable") manages to avoid offers of work.
2. He conceals his possession of other means.
3. He (or she) gets on the Unemployment Register fraudulently.

A certain laxity of administration under the second Labor Government undoubtedly led to an increase in all three of these classes and particularly in the third one, in which must be counted many young married women whose participation in industry was never serious and who "went on the dole" as a means of helping out the family income. But although these are the picturesque cases, they are comparatively unimportant. Even the severest official critics of the system have not alleged that the proportion of deliberate fraud is high, or that any great sum of money could be saved were the rules to be strictly observed. Their criticism has been leveled rather on what they consider to be the political, financial, and social undesirability of the whole system. Those aspects of the problem of unemployment relief are exhaustively treated in specialized works; the sub-

ject has been mentioned here merely to furnish some indication that, in the view of the writer, no widespread personal demoralization has ensued, consequent upon drawing the dole, among the lower classes.

v

To the extent that the English climate seldom provides extreme heat or extreme cold, the poorer classes are relatively well off. They do not have in summer to lie on their tenement fire escapes and gasp for breath; nor in winter necessarily to provide a considerable degree of artificial heat or freeze to death. Their food can be kept edible without refrigerators, and they do not need differing weights of clothing for summer and winter.

But these are, at best, negative blessings. On the positive side there is little to support the hypothesis that the English lower classes, however much their standard of living may be shown by statistics to exceed that prevalent on the Continent, do actually enjoy a disproportionate share of the good things of life.

Here the commentator must be well aware that he is treading upon dangerous ground. In the first place, what is a standard of living? Reduce it to its elementals and the "three ounces of meat daily" in the family budget might still mean either a succulent bit of steak or a rind of fat pork. And by what standard is a scale of life to be considered low or high? Is a bathroom to be considered a necessity or a luxury? Obviously any generalizations on the subject must be relative and must be tested against the background of national tradi-

tion, personal levels of appreciation, the prevalent price level, and a good many other things.

Even the minimum "subsistence level" necessarily varies enormously; not only, for instance, between Bombay and Birmingham, but also between Birmingham and the village of Bigham-in-the-Wold. Within England it would be quite possible to find a factory operative and a butcher's assistant, in the same provincial town, both in receipt of the same money income, but maintaining totally different scales of life. There are no sets of governmental or other statistics which take into account the shin bone of beef for which nothing at all is paid and from which the butcher's assistant's wife provides a dinner which, otherwise, would have cost her a shilling or two; none which allow for the fact that the mill operative may earn an extra half crown a week for polishing the boss's car, or that he may be sending five shillings a week to a temporarily unemployed son in Canada.

Nevertheless, within broad limits one can generalize to a certain extent; and within these limits one may say that the British workingman is by no means pampered. His lot, if one may believe investigators who spend their lives in studying it, is certainly immeasurably better than it was a century ago—but then, so is most people's. The vast and fascinating "Survey of London Life and Labour" is reasonably definite on the point that the average London workman of to-day receives more pay for fewer hours of work than he did forty years ago; and that the development of rapid transit, of the cinema, and of mass-produced articles of consump-

tion makes his life undeniably fuller and more varied. The great development of State social services likewise should not be underestimated. Take all these things into consideration and there remains the fact that England's manual tasks are performed by men and women who proportionately draw out from the national income far less than they contribute to it.

To be specific, the average money income of a moderately skilled male urban workman was, in 1931, probably between fifty and sixty shillings a week. It is true enough that in some London boroughs, for instance, garbage collectors whose work demands no apparent degree of skill received £4 a week; but it is also true that thousands of agricultural laborers had only £1, 10, 0. At that time it was currently estimated in England that food sufficient to keep four people reasonably well nourished could not be bought for less than thirty shillings a week. An average rent in the case of the urban workman with a family was ten shillings a week. This left him from ten to twenty shillings weekly for clothes, household replacements, amusements, and the whole remaining gamut of human needs.

Bring a French factory operative from Lille to Bradford, give him a similar salary to his English prototype, endow him and his wife with a full knowledge of the language and of local customs, and undoubtedly he would contrive to live better than the Englishman. His wife, in the first place, would cook better, sew better, and keep house better than the English woman. But the Frenchman would not be able to resist wage cuts or short time forced upon him by the fact that his em-

ployer's antiquated looms could not compete with semi-automatic ones worked by Indian coolies; or because his employer was subject to the highest level of taxes in the world; or because his employer had to pay 7 per cent upon his bank overdraft because the Bank of England had been forced to raise its own rediscount rate because it had felt it necessary to aid certain merchant banks which had lent to Germany money borrowed from France, and which could not get it back when they wanted it.

Human nature being what it is, not all of the English workman's weekly three pounds or so goes where it should if he were to live according to the régime prescribed by cost-of-living indexes. He wants, for instance, to smoke and to drink beer. But his tobacco and his alcohol are very expensive because so much of the retail price he pays goes back to the government by way of taxation. He wants to have a flutter on the races; and because a beneficent government doesn't think that this is good for him, his street-corner bookmaker cannot give him such odds as can the bookie in Tattersall's ring.

And the English workman is often frankly improvident. He will spend upon port wine for his racing greyhound the shillings that the professors of economics would tell him were better expended upon a stout pair of shoes for his wife or left in the Post Office Savings Bank. During the war period of soaring wages he bought player pianos and fur coats and silk stockings and gramophones for his wife, to the infinite disgust of upper-class people who had enjoyed such lux-

uries for years but then were being forced to give them up.

The war days are over; but the keenest commercial brains of the day continue to fish for the poor man's pennies. Motion-picture palaces, dripping with gilt and imitation marble, soft carpets and uniformed attendants, tempt him with the invitation to enjoy a couple of hours' vicarious high life. Football and dog-racing stadia compete for his custom; newspapers dangle premiums and prizes before his eyes if he will only subscribe and thus enable them to present inflated certificates of circulation to their advertisers; cigarette manufacturers lead him on with artful coupon schemes to buy more "gaspers." And the directors and stock-holders of all these enterprises complain about the high level of wages and say that something ought to be done about it.

Withal the British workman is patient. Sometimes I, who can never know him except as a sympathetic foreigner can do so, think that, in the last analysis, that is the most remarkable thing about him—his vast, stolid, patient, unimaginative tolerance.

Of course it is the lot of the peasant to endure; to bow his head alike before the cold wind and the storm of the displeasure of his betters. The lower-class Englishman is not like that. No element of the submissive enters into his make-up, as those have found who have sought to dragoon him. I should greatly pity the invading general who sought to set the English population to forced labor; a recalcitrant mule or dromedary is a marvel of willingness beside the English workman

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who has made up his mind not to do something. Nor, at the other extreme, does it follow that the average proletarian here has rationalized his universe and consciously adjusted his attitude toward it. Circumstances have made him what he is but his creed is simple: a reasonable amount of work for a reasonable amount of pay and not too much overtime; and don't trust the people who want you to do distasteful things for your own good. Beyond that, the creature comforts of life—on a very moderate scale; a bit of fun; and if there isn't enough to go around on those terms, why, the blokes that have more than they need can jolly well stump up!

The obvious reflection here suggests itself that if the above analysis is accurate, it was little less than an act of criminal weakness to enfranchise such a class. As a matter of fact the Diehard Tories have called it much worse than that; but in the long run those who allowed the franchise to be broadened had no choice. When they needed the lower classes' aid to carry the war to a successful conclusion (and indeed to carry it on at all) the people responded. But they also remembered. Had they not been given the vote, they would have taken it.

VI

Yet nothing could be more orderly than the English lower class, even, if the word still may be used in its old Victorian sense, more respectable. Its civic behavior is little short of exemplary—in the sense, that is, of personal conduct. Its monogamy is nearly absolute and it takes its religion seriously, if not tragically. Comparatively speaking, it is clean and tidy, as can be

substantiated by a glance at any public park or museum in England. It does not recklessly cast litter about, or break shrubs or pick flowers, or carve its initials wherever space affords. There is an innate sense of orderliness here that has no parallel in the world; the regimented German public or the half-cowed native mob that melts away instinctively before white officers of the law are as alien to it as is the undisciplined, volatile American crowd. An English crowd is never dangerous, save in the most exceptional instances. Thus, in ninety-nine cases out of one hundred a street crowd will side with a policeman who is making an arrest, even to the extent of chasing his prisoner for him should the prisoner break away. In the hundredth case the crowd will make a determined effort to obstruct the policeman; and in this case it will generally be found that either the officer's manner of making his arrest was ill-advised, or that his grounds for taking action were flimsy.

When Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson was murdered on the doorstep of his London house, the assassins made off with their pistols still in their hands. A crowd began to gather and to follow them; and from that moment they had not a chance in the world to escape. From time to time they turned and menaced the crowd with their pistols, or stood at bay; the crowd in turn retreated or halted. But it continued inexorably on the track of the murderers: inexorably as the sound of the voodoo drums pursues the Emperor Jones in Eugene O'Neill's play of that name. Policemen eventually appeared; the crowd formed a circle around the uni-

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formed men and the murderers; and the latter surrendered without the slightest effort at resistance. The crowd then made no attempt to lynch them, or even to injure them; it simply disintegrated and went about its business.

This apparent docility, combined with instinctive self-respect, makes of the English lower class a thing apart. The English servant is one of the few in the world who can be obliging, yet not servile; firm, yet not disrespectful. The English miner as he comes up from the pits, blackened, uncommunicative, slouching, might strike the casual observer as a definitely low human type. Yet few finer examples of conscious heroism are listed than the exploits of these same miners when there has been a disaster underground; and no men are better or more loyal or more interesting companions than the miners whom their fellows send to the House of Commons. The agricultural laborer may, and probably does, live in a damp cottage which eventually will land him with rheumatism or tuberculosis, or perhaps both; he may even in this day of grace find it necessary to vote, to worship, and to arrange his sex life to conform to the opinions of his employer. But he has not the terrible grasping meanness of the French peasant or the intolerant distrust of strangers of the Carolina hill billy.

VII

This moderation—one would call it “reasonableness” were it not that the middle and upper classes consider it unreasonable—extends into English politics. Com-

munism as an organized political force scarcely exists in England; the last figures to be made public showed the membership of the English Communist Party to be only about 5,000. Within the Labor Party itself the moderates are in a great majority; and when the party felt it necessary, in August, 1931, to throw over three of its hitherto most loved and respected leaders, Messrs. MacDonald, Snowden, and Thomas, almost the first comment by the *Daily Herald*, Labor's organ, was a plea that there should be no personal victimization or vituperation.

Similarly, there exists little disposition among the lower classes to envy the possessions of the upper classes as such.

The rich man is envied his Rolls-Royce, not because it *is* a Rolls-Royce, but because it strikes the laboring man as unjust that one man should have a £3,000 motor car while another has not got a pair of whole boot soles. Beyond this elementary equation material jealousy scarcely reaches. The ardent trade unionist who may subscribe whole-heartedly to the Labor Party's ideal of complete socialization of the British State would, nevertheless, not be prepared to vote for total confiscation of the property of the rich as such. He has not the slightest objection to one man's possessing more than another, so long as nobody is in want of necessities. Nor is he, to any great extent, desirous of replacing the fallen aristocrat. After a brief orgy of Corona Coronas and champagne the average English laborer would infallibly return to shag and beer.

The English revolution, when and if it comes, will be

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accompanied by no machine-gun massacres, as in Russia; and by no castor oil, as in Italy. In the first place, as long as the aristocrat lives up to the tradition which the proletariat has set for him, he is guaranteed the tolerance and even the affection of the masses. No Labor leader is as popular in the slums as are Lord Lonsdale and Lord Derby, who are two outstanding aristocrats of the old tradition. The workingman harbors no real resentment against the man who has enriched himself—provided always that he retains a measure of common humanity—although he is quite prepared cheerfully to tax him to the vanishing point. And in the last analysis it apparently carries some comfort to be able to point to the existence of an upper class, whose very foibles and weaknesses can be taken as an indication that even lords and ladies sometimes manage their lives as unintelligently and as incoherently as do other people.

One here is reminded of the story of the ambassador's butler. The ambassador, who shall be nameless, confided to the author of this book that the English were a strange race. The author agreed that there was a good deal to be said for this point of view, but inquired what particular facet of the English character had reflected this particular strangeness. It appeared that the ambassador, genuinely interested in other people and their problems, had decided to find out whether his dignified and imperturbable butler really was human, and to this end he lost no opportunity of engaging him in conversation. Eventually it transpired that the butler was indeed human to the extent of having a wife and a son.

The ambassador inquired concerning the boy's future and was informed that the father hoped to make of his son as good a butler as he was himself.

"But," the ambassador pointed out, "my butler at home is sending his boy to college. That boy may be a physician, or a bank president, or a lawyer. In our country we want our sons to be something bigger, something better, than their fathers. Haven't you any ambition of that sort for your boy?"

The butler communed with himself.

"No, sir," he said at last, "I can't say that I have. For, whatever happened, he would always be the son of a butler, wouldn't he?"

He would be greatly mistaken who held this attitude to be either servility, reversed snobbery, or proletarian consciousness. The ambassador's butler at heart felt that to be a butler was an honorable calling; that presumably, for some time to come, there would be a demand for good butlers; that the professions were overcrowded anyhow; and that his son would fill a useful niche in the community were he to follow in his father's footsteps.

Thus, while social status in England to a great extent is conditioned upon the possession of wealth or the nature of the work one performs, it does not perforce follow that the acquisition of sudden wealth necessarily causes a reorientation of ambition. From time to time since the war great and sudden wealth has accrued to Englishmen of all classes as the result of their luck in the huge racing sweepstakes. It once became my task to check up on some of those people and to learn, as

far as possible, what they had done with their money. The result frankly surprised me. Although the accumulation of a fortune overnight is popularly supposed to be demoralizing, I could not discover a single instance in which the winner of a big prize had made a fool of himself. Indeed, their disposition of their winnings would have gladdened the heart of Samuel Smiles himself.

A barmaid had bought the hotel in which she had worked; a haberdasher's clerk had acquired the shop and was running it himself; a laborer purchased a garage business. The results really would have been most encouraging to those altruists who hold that everybody deserves more money; and equally discouraging to those Tory gentlemen who hold that it's no use doing anything for the lower classes because they don't appreciate it. If the City of London had invested its carefully hoarded money as intelligently as these people did their windfalls, Mr. Hatry still would be out of jail and the Bank of England would not have had to raise a loan abroad in a vain endeavor to keep sterling at gold parity.

CHAPTER VII

I

Possibly the foregoing chapters of this book will have conveyed some explanation of the paradoxical fact that the Englishman at different times presents himself to foreign observers as a strong individualist and as an equally strong communist. (The latter term is, of course, used in its original sense and without the connotations lent it by its application to the Russian Soviet experiment.)

While there is little reality in the concept of "the Englishman" which may be built up synthetically by adding up the sum of qualities more or less common to large numbers of actual Englishmen, it must perforce serve, *faute de mieux*. This Englishman, then, has a keen sense of his position as a political and economic unit in a closely knit society; but as soon as he feels that his duty to the State has been discharged he reverts to an extreme individualism.

During the post-war period the definition of the phrase, "his duty to the State," has broadened enormously. Pre-war England tended generally to regard government as the reward of the few and as a necessary imposition upon the many. The predominant social philosophy was "survive or perish." To-day the many are taking hold of the government and re-shaping it

according to their own notions, while the idea that the State owes the individual work, if possible, but maintenance in any event is seriously challenged no longer by any important body of opinion. But although what might be termed the Englishman's public personality occupies relatively a greater part of his life than it did before the war, it continues to be dissociated sharply from his private characteristics and attitude toward life generally. The outward and visible sign of a first-rate political crisis in England is discerned when politicians actually remain in London over the week-end. Indeed, in explaining his actions during the weeks prior to the formation of the so-called National Government in 1931, Mr. Baldwin pointed out quite seriously that, although he was aware of the critical state of the country, he had gone off to Aix-les-Bains as usual lest rumor, observing that he had postponed his holiday, should whisper that the crisis must therefore be not only serious, but fatal!

II

To the Teuton, the Latin, and the American, all of whom think in straight lines, there is something baffling beyond belief in the—to them—eccentric orbit of English thought. It is simply beyond their comprehension that an adult and educated man should be able to carry in his mind concepts which not only are contradictory but even hopelessly confused and intermingled. Their intelligence rejects the kindly explanation, which nevertheless happens to be the fact, that the Englishman is quite unconscious of the contradictions in his words and

actions. They accuse him of hypocrisy, of perfidiousness, of instability, and double-dealing—to his own honest bewilderment, for he considers himself the bluntest and simplest of fellows, who gives his word and sticks to it without equivocation or quibble.

The intelligent Englishman will admit quite frankly that his Empire and his Constitution are both marvels of contradiction. "But that," he will explain kindly, "is only the way we do things." The explanation sometimes seems inadequate to foreigners as a justification of the allocation of seven votes in the League of Nations Assembly to an Empire which is one and indivisible; confusing to statesmen who never are sure just how much of the Empire they may have concluded a treaty with; and even exasperating to students of constitutional law who discover that, as a tangible entity, the British Constitution does not exist.

An incident, trivial in itself, but perfectly illustrative of the point, took place in the autumn of 1931. Its hero was Mr. Ramsay MacDonald—admittedly a Scotsmen—whose intellectual honesty never has been impugned even by his severest critics. Mr. MacDonald, as the world knows, had broken with his own party and accepted the King's commission to form a so-called "National Government." It therefore seemed proper to him to communicate with his constituents of Seaham Valley and to explain to them his course of action. He did this in a letter to the local Labor Party, a letter which embodied a vigorous defense of his policy but in which, like a good democrat, he placed himself at the disposition of the local organization and said that he

would do whatever they wished. There was no shadow of qualification or reserve; never was a more straightforward offer made; and the miners of Seaham Valley, being simple-minded men, assumed that the Prime Minister meant what he said. So they promptly requested him to resign.

And did he?

Mr. MacDonald replied:

The spirit of the letter which I wrote you some days ago is still my spirit, and I wish to repeat to you that I put myself in your hands.

In view of one part of your resolution, I desire to make it perfectly clear to you, however, that I shall not, under any circumstances, carry out the above intention whilst it involves the desertion of a duty, which I consider to be imperative, to protect the great mass of wage-earners of this country from a serious disaster. Any action I may therefore take in response to any resolution passed will only be after I have finished the duty which I am now undertaking, and not before.

And so reasonable did the Prime Minister's neat *volte-face* seem to the press, at least, that only a single one of the more important newspapers permitted itself a jocular reference to it, while the *Manchester Guardian* even was surprised that the Seaham Valleyites should have been so naïve as to take Mr. MacDonald at his word!

But if Mr. MacDonald is Scotch, Mr. Stanley Baldwin certainly is as English as can be. There is not space within the confines of this volume to examine Mr. Baldwin's successive masterpieces of obscure verbiage

by means of which he edged himself and his party closer and closer to the open advocacy of protective tariffs. Now, everybody knew where Mr. Baldwin would eventually arrive on this question and nobody except himself was surprised when, upon joining the National Government, he explained that at the end of the coalition ministry's life, the Conservatives would fight an election on a straight tariff issue (a prediction which, by the way, was not fulfilled).

But did Mr. Baldwin realize that for eighteen months he had merely been indulging in intellectual shadow-boxing, his opponent being invisible to everybody but himself? Not a bit of it! No more than Mr. MacDonald realized that he himself would have been the first to characterize as preposterous, in international negotiations, an offer made, accepted, and evaded as was his own offer to his constituents.

III

While the Englishman recognizes the indictment against him on this score when it is couched in general terms (as witness the complacent admission of, and even affection for, the phrase, "muddling through"), he seldom is able to perceive it in concrete instances. Thus, the British negotiators at the ill-fated Geneva Naval Conference of 1927 simply could not understand that what they termed the British trade routes were, in fact, not the sole possession of Great Britain but that, in so far as they had any existence at all, they were ocean highways used by the ships of every maritime nation and that these other nations also might conceivably be

interested in the "protection" of these trade routes. Again, it seems seldom to occur to British politicians or publicists, who are concerned with the "restoration" of the pre-war export trade, that a world in which all nations were exporters and none importers would approximate closely the worst nightmare of any economist.

Presumably the London *Times* saw nothing amusing in its headline, "Continent Isolated," when for three days a storm held up shipping in the Channel. It was an American woman resident in England who called my attention to this headline, and when I showed it to an English journalist he inquired, in honest bewilderment:

"Well, what's wrong with it?"

I suggested gently that, having regard only to the population and superficial areas of the two geographical entities, foreigners might have been inclined to say "England Isolated" rather than "Continent Isolated"; but he didn't see the point, and hasn't seen it yet.

Again, the *Daily Mail* of Wednesday, June 3, 1931, in the course of two articles, in adjoining columns, about the Derby, carried the following typical paragraphs:

(ARTICLE 1)

I stood next to an American from the Pacific Coast who was busy handing £20 at a time to unknown bookmakers with that confidence which is such a tribute to the natural honesty of our race.

(ARTICLE 2)

Welshing bookmakers at Epsom yesterday, according to a Scotland Yard official, constituted a record. Detectives

who were in the paddock were called to the Downs and chased many of the absconding bookmakers. The number was put at 100.

The Englishman, of course, makes his own unconscious allowances regarding such incongruities. He sees nothing curious in such facts as that the standard defense in a libel action in this country is that "the words complained of were true in substance and fact; or alternatively that they were incapable of bearing the meaning attributed to them." In other words, "What I said was true, only I didn't say it." His objection to a protective tariff is softened if the offending legislation is called "Safeguarding of Industries." He will use the phrase "going up west" (akin in application to the American "going down town") when he is en route to a retail shopping district of London which geographically and topographically lies not up, but down; and not west, but east, from the point from which he is going.

IV

All this is very confusing to the average foreigner who, if he eventually can be prevailed upon to drop the charge of hypocrisy, nevertheless clings to the accusation of inconsistency, and then is more baffled than ever to find that the Englishman not only admits but glories in his inconsistency. Nobody thought the less of Mr. MacDonald for not resigning in order to carry out his promise to his constituents, because nobody seriously anticipated that he would resign. Nobody suggests that because Mr. Baldwin says "I am not a clever man," he

should make way for someone who is. It is well understood that Mr. Baldwin's remark was one part conventional modesty and three parts an effort to explain that he did not perform flashy intellectual gymnastics. He did not mean to imply that he was stupid or unintelligent.

Eventually the foreigner may come to appreciate that words in England quite well can carry much more or much less than their dictionary connotations; that here, more than in any other country, the interpretation of a phrase depends not only upon the actual words used, but upon the personality of the man who uses them, his surroundings, and his momentary mental orientation. When an editorial writer in the *Morning Post* declares that the nation must be saved, he means "that part of the nation which is non-Socialistic." The editorial writer in the *Daily Herald* who uses the same phrase on the same day means by "the nation" exactly that portion of the population that the *Post's* writer does not include. Incidentally both, if you asked them, would deny indignantly that they meant anything but "the whole nation!"

v

While the observer of manners and customs learns from experience to predict *how* the average Englishman will react in given circumstances, his attempts to explain *why* the Englishman reacts as he does are usually foredoomed to end in disaster.

That there exists in both English-speaking nations a strong ostrichlike tendency is, of course, apparent. The

Englishman's dislike of facing unpleasant facts (or, having faced them, of doing anything about it) is proverbial and is reflected in English literature from the seventeenth century political satirists to the latest works of George Bernard Shaw. It is also fashionable to-day to recall old prophecies of disaster and to smile at their vain warnings. The confidences of Pepys to his diary that he feared the kingdom was undone and the gloomy forebodings of Carlyle, two centuries later, alike are called to witness the fallibility of prophecy. It is, perhaps, scarcely intelligent to assume that because disaster has not yet arrived, it never will come; but it is very human and, more than that, very English to do so.

The Englishman finds his justification of the crazy quilt that is his present social and political fabric in the pragmatic excuse that it serves its purpose. As a matter of fact, it no longer serves his purpose and he will probably remake it; but afterward he will not admit having done so.

Meanwhile individualism, not to say eccentricity, continues to hold sway. The Englishman keeps to the left of the road while the rest of the world goes to the right; but to show his independence he, too, keeps to the right of the sidewalk. He makes it illegal to sell cigarettes after eight P.M., but thoughtfully provides shilling-in-the-slot automatic machines from which cigarettes may be obtained at any hour by a process which is not, legally speaking, a sale. He passes laws to make betting upon horse races illegal and thereafter cheerfully protects with the whole majesty of the law the bookmakers who have observed certain legal subterfuges, the while

relentlessly prosecuting the independent bookmaker who operates on city street corners rather than in a mahogany-paneled office. He refuses to permit the operation in England of sweepstakes on the races, although he subscribes in his millions to the Irish Free State and the Calcutta sweeps. He makes it a crime to buy a drink on one side of the street after ten o'clock, but legal on the other side until eleven. He establishes, in order to bar out American automobiles, a licensing law under which taxation is dependent on horse power calculated according to a curious formula, then is surprised to discover that English manufacturers, producing cars to meet this formula, cannot sell them abroad. And when he is faced with a terrific crisis in governmental finance, as in 1931, he establishes a so-called "National Government" which is not national at all, and enacts economies and taxes which would have been admirable to meet a similar situation had it occurred not later than Gladstone's death.

In a word, so many of his actions and his justifications for them are so hopelessly contradictory, so confused, and withal so naïve that one is sometimes seriously tempted to fall back upon an explanation which is never for a moment doubted, any more than the law of gravity would be doubted, by millions of Englishmen; that the welfare of the English race is a first charge upon the accounts of Creation.

But one need not succumb to this particular temptation, because it is going out of fashion even in England itself. Very slowly—so slowly that the process may be the result of experience rather than of reason—the

Englishman is beginning to realize that the long, prosperous Victorian era which facilitated such complacent disregard of cleverness or intelligence is as dead as Queen Anne. There exist no means for ascertaining how many Englishmen still think that God's in His heaven, all's right with the world; but an alarmingly large number are dubious about the first statement and convinced that the second is erroneous.

CHAPTER VIII

I

IN so far as the everyday conduct of the Englishman reflects his mental attitude, there distinctly is ground for hope. Life in England is highly civilized; perhaps, as regards the deportment of the people, the most highly civilized in the world. As regards the mechanism by which life is maintained and made something more than merely endurable, it is somewhat primitive but without the harshness that seems inseparable from over-mechanization.

Of course generalization is here, as elsewhere, dangerous. There exist communities and societies in England where the mental standards are as narrow as Tennessee's or Normandy's. But England, which is 80 per cent urbanized, is also at least 80 per cent civilized.

Above all, in his personal relations as apart from his intellectual exercises, the Englishman manages to preserve a surprising degree of that most advanced of all the abstract virtues—tolerance. It has been twenty years since Cobb wrote in "The American Vandal" of the pitch to which the art of minding one's own business had been brought in this country. England has become more regimented and chivvied since the war; but the average man still refrains rather more than does his prototype anywhere else in the world from the thankless

attempt to become his brother's keeper. Something of the spirit of Voltaire ("I wholly disapprove of what you say but I will defend to the death your right to say it") yet lingers with these islanders.

Examples, important and trivial, abound to buttress this claim which may sound far-fetched in view of the Englishman's traditional qualities of insularity and narrow-mindedness. The important ones are obvious enough as, for instance, the reluctance to adopt conscription during the war and the latitude, as compared with other nations engaged in the war, toward conscientious objectors to military service. Religious bitterness, in the sense of hostility between creeds, scarcely exists. Pressure making for social conformity is not so rare, but it is rapidly passing from all but the most hidebound societies. And while wealth may determine the assignment of a family to the upper, lower, or middle classes it has, within wide limits, not much influence upon the formation of personal relationships. Here again the generalization is incomplete because in England social contacts are largely personal and usually limited to specific segments of life common to the participating individuals. Outside the small section of society in the illustrated-weekly sense, the people with whom one dines, drinks, plays cards, and dances are all different. Mr. A. may know Mr. B. only as a fellow customer of a particular hairdresser; Mr. C. as a useful fourth hand at bridge, and Mr. D. as a luncheon companion once a week. It is possible to meet a man almost daily in your club for twenty years and never know whether he is married or single, where he lives,

the nature of his occupation, or his approximate income. I myself sat across a table from three fellow lunchers at Simpson's at least twice a week for five years before the unsolicited knowledge came to me that one of them was a real-estate man, one an Admiralty lawyer, and one an Air Ministry official. None of them knew anything about the others' home lives. And at that it was not from them but from George, paragon of all waiters, that the information came. Incidentally it was George, ex-naval man, who in my hearing in 1921 rebuked some young Englishmen who had been making unnecessarily loud and offensive remarks about the presence in the next box of two German statesmen who were in London for the Reparations Conference by reminding them simply that "perhaps they didn't know the gentlemen understood English." To me, later, George explained that in any event, although Germans, "the blighters are human beings!"

This live-and-let-live attitude sometimes produces amusing incidents. Some years ago, for instance, I happened to become aware of the fact that, at about four o'clock every afternoon, there used to pass along Aldwych a lady who invariably led on a chain a magnificent but rather bored-looking leopard. In New York everyone would have stopped to see what she was advertising. In Paris she would have caused a riot. But in London nobody paid any attention to her beyond a casual glance. It was assumed—if anyone really thought at all about it—that the lady doubtless had her own good reasons for leading a leopard down Aldwych. If she had, and if they were not immediately apparent,

well, what of it? It was her own affair. And if she had not, there still was nothing to be done about it, so long as the leopard behaved itself.

Cobb thought that it was because there are so many Englishmen in such a little England that people mind their own business to such an extent. European writers have found the cause merely in the Englishman's inhibitions in the matter of public behavior. A further explanation may lie in the fact that, particularly since the war, conventions in England have tended to be voluntarily adopted rather than imposed from without. Communal pressure is not brought to bear, as in some other countries, to make the individual wear particular clothing, belong to a particular church or country club, or choose particular people for his social as well as his business associates. Municipal patriotism of the "Watch Us Grow" type, or of the sort that makes Hull desire to outstrip Sheffield in population, is almost nonexistent. Rupert Brooke in his letters relates with satisfaction how he told an enthusiastic Babbitt that his, the poet's, home town had 400 inhabitants when the Christian era began, had grown to 500 by the Norman Conquest, but had slumped back, during the next thousand years, to 400.

Whatever its cause, the effect of this characteristic, at least to an individualist, is admirable. The chief thing that mars it is the fact that, while smoking is permitted to a much greater extent than in New York, particularly in theaters and in the subway, the fashionable restaurants maintain a wholly irrational ban upon pipes, though tolerating cigars or cigarettes!

Allied with this quality of tolerance there is widely distributed another which may be termed equanimity, imperturbability, *phlegm*, or stodginess, according to the point of view of the commentator. Although the average Englishman is by no means the strong, silent man that he likes to believe he is and that his newspapers advertise him to be, it is, nevertheless, comparatively seldom that he "goes off the deep end." An English crowd does not readily stampede, and it is equally the fact that the individual tends to remain self-possessed.

A comparatively high degree of individual honesty, of respect for law and order and an extreme respect for property—in the concrete; perhaps not, politically speaking, in the abstract—go far toward rounding off some of the rough corners of communal life. So do the little acts, words, and phrases that are the superficial manifestations of individual politeness; although some of them, such as "Sorry" and "Kew" (the English rendition of "Thank you") have become so stereotyped that they remind one of the man on the platform of the Baker Street Station who absent-mindedly remarked "Sorry" when he dropped a penny into a slot machine and "Kew" when he got his box of matches. But national definitions of politeness vary. The Englishman does not uncover his head when a lady enters a lift; on the other hand, the breeziness of the American elevator boy seems to him plain rudeness. Nor does an Englishman consider it necessarily impolite to insist upon what he conceives to be his rights in the matter of having a railway-carriage window open or closed; or

to give a chance-met American his candid opinion on the war-debt question.

II

Every country and every age sets up as a measuring standard of its own humor that which it is pleased to term the lack of humor of some other country. In the United States the Englishman is the traditional lay figure for the man who never can see a joke; in Germany it is the Pole; in France they are more catholic and exclude all except Frenchmen, and a good many of those, as witness the immortal Marius and Olive cycle! In England it usually is the Scot who is made a butt; while the Scotsman himself never will admit that any Englishman ever has had, or ever can have, a sense of humor.

To my mind the best native definition of English humor is that given by Mr. Henry W. Nevinson in "Rough Islanders":

To speak of English humour would be to review and analyse the whole of English nature, of which humour is the soul or essence. It is the air we breathe, the atmosphere from which we dare not escape, for without it we should stiffen into pedants and doctrinaires, fit only for the mummy-cloths. As easy to define life as English humour, and those who do not live in it can never learn. It has little to do with laughter, and little with gaiety. It hardly smiles, and some have said it weeps more often. But they exaggerate, for it has too much self-control and modesty to weep, or to use any outward gesture. There is no hatred in it, and no contempt or satire, but when we have said it implies affection, irony, quiet fun, and perhaps a touch of pity, we are not much nearer the reality.

Unfortunately the standard is not quite so high as Mr. Nevinson would have us believe; all too many have found escape from "the atmosphere from which we dare not escape." None the less he comes close to the intangible concept which is English humor. Verbal crispness of the French or American brand scarcely exists, save for such phrases, now in common use, as "Sez you!" which have been lifted bodily from the American talkies. Repartee and epigram have been largely abandoned to the cockneys who sturdily keep up a good average.

Thus, an old lady who got on a bus in the Strand hesitatingly asked the conductor:

"Oh, conductor, do you go past the Ritz?"

"Blime, lydy," he replied in a reasoning, matter-of-fact tone, "do I look as though I went in there?"

Written English humor notoriously depends for many of its effects upon under-statement and irony. Even the unprintable limericks are rather gently insinuating than of the knock-down-and-drag-out American variety; and the smoking-room story usually depends more upon an impossible situation, a misunderstood phrase, than upon the employment of bawdy words. The nonsense rhyme or story is peculiarly English; and especially beloved are Gilbert, Lear, and such books as Lewis Carroll's "Alice in Wonderland" or Chesterton's "The Flying Inn" or "The Man Who Was Friday," where a certain mad sanity seems struggling, but always just failing, to establish itself.

On the stage the Englishman likes his humor, except in the comedy of manners, to be robust, and always just

around the corner from tears. Years ago, while the rest of the world still was laughing at Chaplin as the man with the funny feet, the British public had taken him to its heart as a great artist who could follow with marvelous instinct the infinitely thin dividing line between farce and tragedy. From Falstaff to George Robey this tradition has held good. It has even found expression in a few comediennes. There was the incomparable Marie Lloyd, who was the soul of Rabelaisianism; in the present day there are Maisie Gay and Cicely Courtneidge, the one such an infinitely comic-pathetic charwoman or flower seller; the other conveying with a gesture or a too-strong aspirate all the vulgarity of the lower middle class.

Thus, the scene is in the home in Peckham, a non-descript suburb, of a local tradesman. He and his wife, dressed for a fancy-dress ball, are waiting for two neighbors similarly attired. The feminine neighbor enters, garbed as Queen Elizabeth.

"And 'oo *hare* you supposed to represent, may I *hask*?" inquires Cicely.

"Why, I'm a queen," says the neighbor's wife proudly.

"Bloody Mary, I should say!" replies Miss Courtneidge with intense emotion, and with stress upon the adjective which without its historical connotation could scarcely be mentioned.

Yet I cannot forget that once when I cabled to New York what I thought a particularly scintillating retort of the late Lord Birkenhead (it was the one in which he told J. H. Thomas, who "'ad an 'ell of a 'eadache," to

go get a couple of aspirates), the copyreader prefaced it with the sour comment, "what *the British sense of humor* regarded as one of the most scintillating"—et cetera!

III

Of course, in the matter of hotels and restaurants, England, outside of London, still is largely in the Dark Ages. One does not dwell more than one is forced to upon the typical hotel bedroom which is to be found everywhere except in the larger cities. The room, to begin with, is almost invariably chilly and damp. A depressed carpet long since has given up the unequal struggle of toning down the frightful wall paper. A melancholy fanlike spill of white paper graces the fireplace where coal should be blazing; a lumpy bed of jangling iron or creaking cheap wood inspires the guest with a determination to reach it late and leave it early. An electric-light bulb depending from the center of the ceiling and another over the dressing table permit him to see to manipulate the Victorian water jug, wash basin, and slop bowl; there is seldom a reading light. For his æsthetic gratification there are upon the walls steel engravings of "The Stag at Bay" or "The Doctor." It is clean and free from vermin, but so are some jails.

No, distinctly, English hotels are not civilized.

One fares better in the roadside inns. Since the use of motor cars has become general a number of the old coaching houses have been renovated and modernized to the point where they are quite tolerable; and some

twenty or thirty of them, unfortunately scattered widely about the country, are really excellent.

The average "pub" (public house—saloon) also is unspeakably dreary with its dingy paint, its lack of chairs or tables, and its general smell of stale beer and tobacco smoke. Inasmuch as the local licensing justices usually frown upon all attempts to brighten or freshen the pubs, it must be inferred that they desire to keep them from being too attractive, and as places where the customer will linger no longer than absolutely necessary to quench his thirst. But they have overlooked the fact that by making the pubs so unattractive that women will not patronize them if they can help it, they have kept them mostly as mere depots for the consumption of alcohol and have missed the opportunity to transform them into cafés where a man might take his family and, if he desired, order lemonade or even coffee.

Yet, despite the continual propaganda kept up in the highbrow weeklies, do the English really desire cafés on the Continental model? One recalls in this connection a story told by James Bone, the London editor of the *Manchester Guardian*, about the restaurateur in Duncannon Street, near Charing Cross, who, greatly daring, on one fine August Bank Holiday placed on the sidewalk a plain wooden table and two chairs and awaited the result of this "brighter London" move. Nothing happened until late afternoon, when a man in a cloth cap came along, sat down at the table, and when a waiter arrived, ordered bacon, eggs, and tea!

Again, he who thirsts is better off by the wayside. The country pub frequently sells beer that is brewed

locally, and is far more palatable than the standardized stuff turned out by the great national breweries. Here the landlord may even have dared to experiment a little with flowers and paint, and it is not a *faux pas* to pass the time of day with the man who stands at your elbow to drink his own beer.

The beer, incidentally, will bear little resemblance to the strong ale of other days. But although weakened, it is still the national drink; for whiskey and wine, however cheap they may be by bootleg standards, cost up to 300 per cent more than they did in 1914. The answer is to be sought in taxation. Of the twelve shillings and sixpence that is the present standard price of a bottle of whiskey (six to the gallon), eight shillings and five-pence-halfpenny go to the exchequer.

Partially because of this increased price (even beer has doubled in cost); partially, no doubt, because of the system that generally obtains of allowing the retail sale of alcohol only during seven hours a day, in two periods surrounding luncheon and dinner time, and partially because of an unmistakable change in the social attitude toward drunkenness, England is a far soberer nation than it has been since statistics have been kept. It is comparatively a rare thing to see a drunken man on the streets in England, and rarer still to see one more than mildly illuminated even at an all-stag dinner or banquet. The following figures illustrate graphically England's increasing sobriety, and furnish some part of the reason why Prohibition, as far as anything human can be said to be certain, will certainly never come to this country. But the basic reason is that England is not easily

swayed by mass hysteria; that, the pub having no connection with politics or organized crime, it is not held as an anathema by any great number of people; and, finally, because there remains in the English nation enough common sense to resist the specious, and to it impertinent, arguments of the Prohibitionist.

ANNUAL CONVICTIONS FOR DRUNKENNESS IN
ENGLAND AND WALES

1911.....	172,130
1912.....	182,592
1913.....	188,877
1914.....	183,828
1915.....	135,811
1916.....	84,191
1917.....	46,410
1918.....	29,075
1919.....	57,948
1920.....	95,763
1921.....	77,789
1922.....	76,347
1923.....	77,094
1924.....	79,082
1925.....	75,077
1926.....	67,126
1927.....	65,166
1928.....	55,642
1929.....	51,966
1930.....	53,080

(Licensing Statistics, 1930: H. M. Stationery Office, Cmd. 3928)

The suggestion has been made that English hotels and restaurants are so bad because the Englishman is essentially a home-loving person. One distrusts these facile generalizations; but it is certain that the English

middle or upper class home is a far more civilized place than the English hotel, or pub, or public institution generally. Exception should, of course, be made for such admirable semi-public organizations as the London Underground Railways, or the Port of London Authority.

To an American most English houses seem devoid of necessary conveniences and domestic labor-saving appliances. But the Englishman doesn't notice the cold and the damp so much; and he adopts labor-saving appliances only in the measure to which he is forced to dispense with servants. He prefers human service; and although a book, and a very melancholy one, could be written on the inefficiency and general hopelessness of the average present-day English domestic servant, it is a fact that these servants hate to use such things as vacuum cleaners or electric dishwashers, and will do so only under virtual compulsion.

On behalf of the servant, it should be said that we of to-day are reaping the whirlwind sowed by the Victorians, who made the lives of so many of their domestics as close an approximation to hell as is reasonably possible above ground. And it wasn't all above ground, either; for in addition to long hours, low pay, dreary bedrooms, hundreds of stairs, acres of shiny surfaces to be polished, and a general tradition of social inequality, there were basement kitchens!

Even to-day far too many Victorian houses are inhabited by far too many Victorian survivals; far too many homes have the routine, sacred as that of the Medes and Persians, of the dismal and eternal soup-fish-

joint-pudding dinner. But civilization is creeping in! Small families and small ovens in flat kitchenettes are doing away with the huge joint that used to come hot to Sunday dinner and cold the rest of the week. Hotels, restaurants, and railways continue to offer a standard breakfast of porridge, kippers, bacon and eggs, toast and marmalade; but an increasing number of people are finding that they get through the morning better on half a grapefruit, toast or rolls, and tea or coffee. Cookery experts are dinninig in the lesson that a salad need not necessarily consist of a discouraged-looking piece of lettuce slopped over with vinegar, nor yet of soggy cold potatoes and something optimistically called mayonnaise. Fruit is becoming a necessity rather than a luxury. Private individuals are even learning to ice their cocktails!

The foregoing, of course, applies only to the homes of the smaller proportion of the population. The gospel of rational food has spread scarcely at all among the poor, all too many of whom, moreover, must spend what they have on sufficient bulk and nourishment to keep them alive.

The homes of the middle and upper classes do, however, represent the aspirations and desires of their owners to a very considerable degree. The rash of small houses that spreads about the great towns may be fantastically ugly; but every house panders to the Englishman's land hunger by giving him at least a little garden. And there he grows flowers which, having the true British sturdiness, thrive and blossom just as though they sometimes received sun and warmth.

The Englishman's home fulfills another very important psychological function in that it satisfies him. The attitude of the average middle-class man when he comes home at night is not, "Where can we go to-night?" but more often "How can we stay at home to-night?"

Twenty years ago an American commentator noted that "an Englishman is continually going home; an American is continually going to business. . . . The Englishman is forever planning and scheming to get home, and to stay at home, and to enjoy the privileges of his home; while the American is more apt to devote his energies to make his business a place to go to, and in which to spend himself."¹ The same thing remains true to-day. Night life, even in London, when compared with the Continental or American type, is simply next to nonexistent. Before one A.M. even the Underground shuts down and travelers must take taxis or walk.

IV

There are at least two angles from which one can regard the undeniable fact that there are still several distinct varieties of speech and pronunciation prevalent in England. One can regret that in spite of the Oxford accents of the broadcasting announcers, the cockney and his children continue atrociously to murder the King's English, to substitute "i" for the long "a," to drop their initial h's, to flatten "o" into "aow." Or one can rejoice in the sturdy independence which preserves such localisms, and which makes even highly educated people

¹ Price Collier, "England and the English."

sound a final "r" on words terminating in "a" (examples: umbrellar up, vanillar ice), say "et" for the past tense of "eat," and swallow half the consonants in long words. Accent and intonation in England still provide a very definite guide to social status, especially if the speaker doesn't forget himself like a lift girl I recently heard in Selfridge's, one of London's great stores. These girls are trained in elocution, and to hear them intoning "Sec-und flo-er: ladeez costumes, hats, jew-el-ry" would delight any philologist. But this one, as the lift emptied of all but the relief operator, turned to her companion and remarked, almost without a pause:

"Aow, Gawd, Liz, 'ow my feet pyne me, somethink crooel!"

And the Londoner, whose own intonation may contain an unmistakable Scotch burr or Irish brogue, or may betray the sharpened "r" sounds of the West Countryman or the flattened vowels of the Lancashireman, invariably tells an American whose sole claim to vocal distinction is that he doesn't talk through his nose:

"But you know you don't talk like an American!"

CHAPTER IX

I

THERE once was an American doctor who, after making a most careful and painstaking investigation of London's milk, water, and sanitation, was able to prove beyond the shadow of a doubt that no child in the British capital could possibly live to reach the age of five. Inasmuch as he was not ignorant, however, of the fact that in reality the infant mortality in London during the period of his study was lower than that in many American cities, he utilized his conclusions to indicate the pitfalls in the path of the inexperienced or too-enthusiastic statistician.

Without delving too deeply into the admirable statistics compiled by the Ministry of Health, one might hazard the opinion that in no respect has the post-war change in the status of the British people been more marked than in that of their generally improved health and physique. To the war-time pacifist it was regrettable that martial fervor was stimulated among the proletariat by the sheer fact that the inflated wages then prevalent meant that many people were, for the first time, really having enough to eat. Of course, toward the end of the war nobody got enough to eat; but then peers and navvies were all in the same boat. During the last decade it is certain that the people of

England have been more amply fed, more wisely fed, and better exercised than they were before the war.

This is not to say that England is within measurable distance of becoming a dietician's paradise. Indeed, to a French or an American gourmet the whole subject of British food is apt to be a painful one. But it is possible for people to be adequately fed without ever having been troubled by the burning question as to whether or not they should take lemon with their caviar. Despite the fact that most of the food served on any particular day in England will be badly prepared and unskillfully cooked, it will be more adequate to the maintenance of health than on the corresponding day, say, in 1913.

It is widely cited against the dole system that the payments to the unemployed are not as wisely expended as they might be, and in many cases the reproach is certainly true. Who of us can look back over the last five years and claim wisdom in his expenditures? Nevertheless the existence of the dole has meant substantial nourishment for many people who otherwise would have subsisted on copious draughts of tea from the pot left stewing on the fire all day long; upon questionable scraps of fish or meat, and upon stale bread. It also has meant that at least a proportion of the men who would have been bending over looms or groping through mine galleries have used their enforced leisure to renew their acquaintance, with fresh air and outdoor exercise.

Among British youth the cult of physical fitness certainly has reached no such point as it has, for instance,

in Germany. Certain hardy souls have sought to popularize sun-bathing, but in these islands the process is a good deal like Hamlet without the ghost. None the less the tendency to take outdoor exercise has greatly increased and, in addition to the playing fields of Eton, the country now has the sports grounds of twenty thousand athletic clubs, where, moreover, the players are perhaps slightly more intelligent than the aristocrats of the 1790's, and have no intention of preparing for future Waterloos. It is significant that, after the names of most of the ministers in Britain's second Labor Cabinet have passed into well-deserved oblivion, there will be remembered with affection the name of George Lansbury, who threw open the London parks to the children of the poor and who has been immortalized already by the invariable application of the phrase, "Lansbury's Lido," to the bathing pool he created in Hyde Park.

The comparatively better fed and better exercised poor have since the war been helped toward health by yet a third development: the stabilization on a peace-time basis of the State Medical Services. Most of the not-too-well paid British workers are perforce included in a scheme of National Health Insurance, under which certain physicians, known as "panel" doctors, are allotted the medical care of these people. The employer and employee pay funds into the exchequer by buying stamps and pasting them on the worker's health insurance card; the exchequer in turn pays the doctor a blanket fee of eight or nine shillings a head yearly for

each of the 500 to 2,500 names on his roster and the doctor is then bound to give free attendance to such of his flock as may fall ill. Of course the scheme has its nonsensical aspects. The imaginary invalid will always be with us. Many panel doctors find that they dispense more colored water and bread pills than drugs. Others, with huge "panels," seem sometimes to employ the rough-and-ready diagnoses of army doctors. But during the war even the army found that a "number nine" generally did more good than harm; and if there is anything beneficial in medical science generally, it can only be counted as a national gain that such a large proportion of the population comes under periodic medical review.

A final contribution toward raising the general health level is contained in the enormous expansion of the so-called "social services" under the successive post-war governments. Grants for education, for subsistence and clothing allowances to school children, for maternity benefits and infant welfare centers and crèches; for pensions for old people and widows—all these have shown a constant tendency to increase. Many politicians and publicists say that the country cannot afford them, and they point to the ever-mounting items in the national budget which represent the financing of these items. Labor politicians, on the other hand, reply that the country cannot afford to do without the social services. Whichever side may be right, it is undeniable that by measures such as those mentioned above, and by State subsidies for the construction of hundreds of thousands

of new dwelling houses, the physical well-being of the population has been enormously improved.

II

The gentler humanitarianism of the post-war years has produced an interesting change in the general attitude toward children and household animals. Perhaps a natural reaction against the wholesale killing during the war years may explain some part of the greater care and attention to the children; and perhaps the artificial method of life imposed by an increasingly urbanized civilization may have something to do with the desire to keep living creatures as pets. In any event, the England of to-day is, as compared with the England even of fifty years ago, a paradise for children, dogs, and pussycats.

One realizes that every generation views with alarm the idiosyncrasies of its own progeny. None the less, even those of us who were late Victorian children can but admit that our parents' attitude toward ourselves was far nearer that of parents in the year 1800 than it was to that of the present generation of fathers and mothers. To-day in England children are both seen and heard. The nursery no longer is a world apart—indeed, some of the most modern of mothers have been heard in moments of domestic stress to voice the wish that it *could* be kept rather less obtrusive than it is. As the American father of a daughter born in England and now (I hope) being educated here, I am inclined to believe that the sway of the child is still less complete in this country than in the United States. But before the

war the precocious American child was a stock figure of the English comic papers; nothing remotely like it was known in real life. Even to-day there remains in this country a widespread impression, sedulously fostered by the English newspapers and the American talkies, that American youth is mostly of the cocktail-and-petting-party type. Without in the least subscribing to such a sweeping generalization, one may point out that neither pastime yet has been included in the program of adolescence here. For one thing, the average English child grows up in an environment where the moderate consumption of alcoholic drinks is as much a matter of course as getting one's hair cut or eating one's dinner. No thrill of forbidden fruit attaches to juvenile drinking, and the average boy of eighteen would be just as likely to make himself sick through eating too much bread and butter as he would be likely to get drunk.

Much the same philosophy prevails in regard to love-making. The Northern races mature slowly in the sexual sense and the majority of English boys and girls of between sixteen and twenty have scarcely begun to bother about sexual relationships. Moreover, the whole social attitude toward matters of sex is in flux. Although a great many Victorian inhibitions prevail, and although the segregation of adolescent boys in boarding schools presents obvious dangers, a tendency is growing to emphasize the naturalness of the sex relationship and to divorce it from the floods of cant that surrounded the subject only a few years ago. Finally, the concept of masculine "purity," in so far as by this term is meant continence, is not taken too tragically among the middle

and upper classes. References by war-time American statesmen to "our pure boys" invariably elicited chuckles in this country. The English boy on the threshold of manhood is, as a matter of fact, rather less prone than a Continental youth of the same age to seek the consolations of paid intercourse; but he is pretty well aware that were he to do so, his father would not necessarily consider that his son had committed the unforgivable sin.

III

While in England, as in many other countries, lip service is fulsomely paid to the ideal of education, there is little evidence to show that here, to a greater degree than elsewhere, there exists any great unanimity concerning the end to which this education is to be applied. There is neither the abstract belief in education for its own sake which exists in Scotland and Germany, nor the intensive specialization of the United States. It is only in England, as far as I know, that responsible newspapers and politicians assert quite frankly that they do not believe in universal free education and that they would abolish it if they had the opportunity.

The basis of the English educational system is the "Board" school, so called from the fact of its control by the Board of Education. In theory these elementary and secondary schools are free to all comers. In actual fact they are patronized almost exclusively by the poorer classes. Whether one's children attend a Board school or a privately conducted one is still one of the factors which determine social caste in England. No

middle-class family will send a child to a Board school if any economy in other directions will serve to avoid it; and this despite the fact that the standards of the Board schools not infrequently are higher than those of the dreary private schools which are run in converted Victorian mansions by masters who have failed at everything else they ever undertook. For instance, I once had occasion to inspect the history textbooks used by the London County Council schools, with the object of finding out how the American Revolution was presented to England's youth; it was at the time of a controversy in the United States concerning the same subject. I examined dozens of histories and found that the majority of them gave comparatively little space to the Revolution, but that, without exception, they depicted the Colonists as patriotic citizens who were quite justified in rebelling against most unjust treatment on the part of the then rulers of England!

Social prejudice applies only to a slight degree against those schools in which the majority of the pupils pay, but which, in return for grants from public funds, admit a certain number of free pupils. It is coming to be realized that the State's insistence upon certain standards in these institutions constitutes a safeguard against the uncertainty of the purely private school, which may be very good or very bad. And against the publicly maintained high schools and universities the social animus is practically nonexistent.

The number of different types of private schools existing is almost unlimited. Some are very, very good; some are terribly bad.

The great "public" schools, which are not public at all but the most expensive in England, likewise vary. Certainly the education given at Eton or Harrow, followed by an Oxford or Cambridge degree, is bestowed upon boys of whom a large proportion become the next generation's rulers of England. But does the social prestige of these institutions have nothing to do with it? And for that matter, will the House of Commons in 1940 contain such a large proportion of public-school-cum-varsity products as it will of Board school graduates?

English opinions differ so widely upon the value of the public schools and the universities that before passing any judgment the foreigner should reflect concerning his own point of view. What is education?

"You despise Oxford, 'Enry, don't you?" Tanner asks Henry Straker in Shaw's "Man and Superman."

"No, I don't," Straker replies. "Very nice sort of place, Oxford, I should think, for people that like that sort of place. They teach you to be a gentleman there. In the Polytechnic they teach you to be an engineer or such like. See?"

Perhaps one does see—a little, at least. And whether England needs more engineers or more gentlemen, who is to say?

Concerning private boarding schools for boys or for girls (there is not much coeducation in England), most Americans who have had experience of them seem to offer this criticism: that when provision for health and diet of the children is, by American standards, adequate, disproportionate attention usually is paid to athletics; while health is apt to be neglected in some of the places

where the standard of scholarship is high. Here again it must be remembered that the failure to provide such things as central heating and shower baths is looked upon as less of an omission in England than it would be in the United States.

One likewise feels a certain diffidence in going beyond a simple mention of the fact that the number of pupils who receive secondary and advanced education in England is far smaller, actually and proportionately, than in the United States. England, with 40,000,000 people, has but nine universities. Yet no insistent demand has arisen for the provision of more facilities for advanced study, and it may be that in this respect England's educational equipment is adequate to the needs of her people.

IV

While there is an increasing tendency on the part of the Englishman to participate in sport rather than merely to look on, the organizers of professional or semi-professional sports have not yet found cause for despair. A championship football match will draw more than 100,000 people; a big match will fill the cricket grounds to capacity; and horse, dog, and motor-cycle racing tracks continue to attract huge numbers of spectators.

Although England's participation in international sporting events during the post-war decade was rather a wry joke to most people here, it is to the credit of English sportsmanship that the loss of once-held championships in everything from golf and tennis to bridge

and ping-pong was accepted with reasonably good grace. As long as any of these championships were won by Americans it was always possible to point out that the Americans had notoriously made a business of training for sport; while if they were won by Frenchmen or Germans other excuses could be found. None the less the fact remains, although it is not quite so cheerfully admitted as sporting writers would have one believe, that the average English amateur player of games would far rather lose than have it said he had neglected all other aspects of life to concentrate upon the acquisition of superiority in one particular field.

v

One specially changed aspect of English life in the post-war years frequently is overlooked entirely by Americans. While the process of mechanization of daily life in the United States has continued without interruption, it had relatively only begun in England when the war cut it short. The popularization of the motor car, the telephone even, the motion picture, of mechanical household appliances, to say nothing of such inventions as radio and the aëroplane, has taken place here since 1918.

During the immediate post-Armistice years the owner of a motor car occupied somewhat the same position in the public estimation as his American prototype had held ten years earlier. Garages were comparatively scarce; mechanical filling stations were virtually unknown, and it was possible to drive through London at an average speed which was distinctly faster than a

walking pace. The typically English cheap light car had not then made its appearance. One paid £500 or more for a British car, or bought vehicles produced primarily for French or American road conditions. The latter were always far better equipped as regards "gadgets," but the construction of their engines rendered them liable to a tax which was seldom under £20 yearly; while British insurance companies continued to base their premium charges upon a car's rated horse power as though it were not possible to kill a pedestrian just as dead with a ten horse-power car as with a twenty!

Although the ratio of motor vehicles to population in the British Isles is still far lower than it is in the United States or Canada, the average owner-driver is convinced that the saturation point has about been reached. Despite the wholesale construction of enormously expensive new roads; despite even the fact that London in 1931 went to the revolutionary length of installing traffic lights in one whole street, congestion increases. The rolling English road was not constructed for motor traffic; neither was the twisting English street. A journey from a northern suburb into central London which, in the halcyon days of 1921, I could accomplish in twenty minutes in a 1920 Chevrolet, now averages thirty-five minutes in a quite modern Chrysler. One of the reasons for this is that the Englishman's traffic sense (as regards motor vehicles) has not kept pace with the increase in the number of cars on the roads. The operators of the London buses as a class are probably the best drivers in the world and the efficient, yet courteous and patient, way in which they handle their heavy

vehicles is the despair of amateurs. But if London has five or six thousand of the best chauffeurs in the world, it also has at least fifty thousand of the worst. The Parisian driver is incredibly reckless, but at least he can be competent. The New Yorker, when he gets the chance, drives fast but well. There are all too many drivers in London who have only the foggiest notion of what it is all about. Put any Broadway traffic officer at Piccadilly Circus for one shift of eight hours, and I warrant he would finish with snow-white hair!

There is scarcely anything known in the lexicon of bad driving in which these Londoners do not indulge. The taxi drivers are the worst. A taxi will be proceeding at a steady twenty miles an hour, when the driver will spot a possible fare on the other side of the street. Without slackening speed (London taxis have an incredibly short wheelbase), without signaling, and without giving any other indication of his intention, the driver will whirl about and proceed down the other side of the street in the opposite direction. Owner-drivers usually signal before executing such maneuvers, but in six cases out of ten, if the driver be a man, and in ten cases out of ten if it be a woman, the wrong signal is given. Nobody thinks anything in London of crossing an oncoming stream of traffic in order to park on the wrong side of the street; of passing on the wrong side; or of stopping without giving any warning.

Pedestrians equally have much to learn. In the center of London their favorite trick is to wait on the sidewalk until a stream of traffic is released at right angles to the direction they intend to take; and then to plunge

madly in front of the advancing cars and buses. In the quieter streets they wander about at will, and very seldom look in either direction before crossing. The only safe rule for a driver in London is an assumption that every pedestrian and 90 per cent of other drivers are potential homicidal lunatics.

The policemen who control such traffic are indeed supermen. Theirs is no robot-like job. They have to deal every minute with individualistic, not to say eccentric, motorists and pedestrians. They have to cope with the Londoner's touching faith in his belief that a street which for years has been a two-way thoroughfare simply cannot, overnight, become a one-way passage. They have to handle sudden floods and gusts of vehicles which get damned and then released in the narrow, tortuous streets. And somehow, marvelously, they keep the traffic moving!

The popularization of the telephone also is a post-war phenomenon. England, of course, has had telephones for a great many years, but until the war their use could not exactly have been termed general. Even to-day one is never sure whether a new maid will not allow one's telephone to ring and ring unanswered, on the ground that she doesn't understand the beastly thing. There has not yet grown up a generation to which the use of the phone is second nature. Even so recently as a couple of years ago Continental calls were something of an adventure; it is only within the last five years that the effective service to the Continent has been extended beyond Paris, which is less than 250 miles away. In August, 1927, my own efforts to telephone London

from Geneva produced a connection as primitive and as unsatisfactory as I should have secured had I tried to get San Francisco from New York in 1913. To-day this has all been changed, and one can get Rome, or New York, or Melbourne more quickly than one usually can obtain a local number; indeed, an operator in the Savoy Hotel, when she got Savannah instead of Adelaide, was this summer heard wearily to murmur:

"Sorry, wrong continent. Please replace your receiver."

Radio and the talkies are as new in the United States as they are here; but it is a mark of the Englishman's changed attitude toward mechanical innovations that he accepted these things far more quickly than he did many of the earlier inventions. These and the aeroplane have had little initial prejudice to overcome. The result is that flying from London to Berlin to-day scarcely provides a thrill even for the most naïve old lady from—shall we say Dumbarton, rather than Dubuque? And the British Army is the most thoroughly mechanized of any!

VI

Easier and quicker communications and transport, plus the depreciation in the Continental exchanges, have been responsible for taking many thousands of Englishmen across the Channel during the last dozen years. During those years, English holiday resorts did little to meet the challenge of their Continental competitors and, as a result, were patronized mostly by people who had compelling reasons for not going anywhere else. In

1931 the English hoteliers secured an unexpected ally in the fact that the pound sterling had slipped off the gold standard; a condition which, if it turns out to be permanent, will mark a definite retrogression in the tide of foreign travel. But whether the people who have patronized Switzerland in the winter and Dinard in the summer will divert their custom to the English equivalents of these places, or whether they simply will give up holiday-making, remains to be seen.

It is certain that the peculiarly English institution of the "Bank Holiday" will continue to gain in popularity. The Bank Holiday comes four times a year and provides a sort of unofficial vacation, not only for the personnel of the banks, but for almost everybody except policemen and foreign journalists. At Easter, at Whitsuntide, on the first week-end of August, and at Christmas these Bank Holidays are decreed. Legally, they merely amount to the declaration of holidays on four Mondays. Actually, they mean that the greater proportion of the population ceases work from Friday evening until Tuesday morning. The Christmas Bank Holiday is always observed the day after Christmas and is dignified by the especial appellation of "Boxing Day." In consideration of what they take to be the Englishman's passion for sport, most Americans imagine that this day must be completely given over to the practice of fisticuffs; as a matter of fact it derives its name merely from the fact that Christmas presents to the postman, the boy who brings the newspapers, the milkman, and various other such people are known as "Christmas boxes," and that this is the day when, by tradition, such

gratuities are distributed. Actually, if the tradespeople have not received their presents well before Christmas, they call around to ask whether you were wanting to see the milkman, or the window cleaner.

The Bank Holidays are the festivals *par excellence* of the lower and middle classes. Every public conveyance, every park, every resort, is crowded to capacity; and if, as so often happens, it is raining, the casual observer cannot but be struck by the determination of the crowd to enjoy sitting still and doing nothing.

Aside from these occasions, the holidays of English people tend chiefly to be compressed into the month of August and the first fortnight of September. This is primarily because the schools are not obliged by the climate to follow the American practice of closing from mid-June to mid-September; but instead close for comparatively long periods at Christmas and Easter, and for only six weeks during the summer. Unless one rejoices in the society and propinquity of his fellow men (and women and children!) English holiday resorts are to be avoided during these six weeks.

VII

Since the war this "nation of shopkeepers" has drastically remodeled a great many of its shops. The change is naturally more noticeable in London than in the provinces; but it can be traced into some of the smaller towns.

Even in 1920 the would-be purchaser was, in the average large shop in London, the object of considerable suspicion. He (or, more often, she) was met at the

door by an elderly gentleman who inquired politely but firmly concerning the visitor's intentions. Having learned of a desire (for instance) to be allowed to purchase a pair of shoes, the elderly gentleman would turn the shopper over to one slightly less elderly, who would solemnly conduct him to the appropriate department; nor would this subordinate relinquish him until someone else took control. But do not, for a moment, imagine that after that one was allowed to wander at will through the departments! One could not get ten steps from the shoe department without being challenged by another employee.

I have often inquired what would have happened had someone manifested a desire, like that of the American shopper, "just to look around." As far as I have been able to find out, the experiment was never tried; it was simply one of the things that were not done.

But it seems, alas! that, despite the doubts of a recent writer to the contrary, the English—or at least English women—are human, after all. For when the American, H. Gordon Selfridge, threw wide the doors of Selfridge's to all comers, Englishwomen actually reveled in the opportunity to stroll about and inspect merchandise from peas to pianos without having to produce a certificate of character, or even to explain their intentions to the shop assistants; and in the early 1920's many of the other large department stores ("drapers," in English) followed suit.

Even now English shops are far less willing to refund money in the case of unsuitable merchandise, or to exchange goods, than are American ones. Competition,

however, is driving them gradually to relax their practices in this regard, just as it has forced them to install restaurants, rest rooms, post offices, and numerous other amenities ; and to consider the art of window display as consisting of something rather more than cramming these spaces with samples of everything in the place except the gas meter.

Perhaps it is this competition that also has produced the curious spectacle of Oxford Street on any normal shopping day. The wide pavements are crammed from curb to building line with women. Short women, tall women, fat women, thin women, pretty women, ugly women, even a few well-dressed women. All, whether they have come in from the suburbs or merely taken a penny bus ride from their flats, move as in a trance. They amble slowly and flat-footedly; their mouths hang open slightly; and their eyes have that glassy stare which comes from intensive window-gazing. For the moment they live in another dimension from the three that all of us except Einstein are sure of; they are Women Shopping.

In the suburbs and provinces the chain stores have done much to keep the local shopkeepers mentally alive. Nevertheless there still exist thousands who are steeped in the old tradition; and if you want to know about them I advise you to read "Kipps" or "Mr. Polly," by H. G. Wells, which are nearly as true to-day as when they were first published. I will add only that in these shops the guiding principle is that the customer is always wrong !

It happened that on one of the four hot days of the

summer of 1930 I entered a "pub" in the Strand in the company of a friend who had not yet given up hope of getting ice in his drinks. Knowing by experience the futility of asking for a cocktail, I ordered a "gin-and-French" (gin and French vermouth). My friend, however, asked for gin-and-ginger beer, with ice in it; and, surprisingly, got it. Emboldened by this, I asked the barman whether he could not substitute the same thing for the drink I had ordered.

He replied that he could not.

I asked why.

He said that if I didn't drink it, it would be wasted.

I pointed out that I hadn't tasted it; that the place served at least two hundred gin-and-Frenches every evening. Why couldn't he give mine to somebody else?

Slightly shaken by this argument, he called the manager, who said he would like to oblige but that he would lose his job if he did. So, since I was getting hotter and thirstier, I replied disgustedly:

"Oh, all right. Never mind. It seems to be an insoluble dilemma."

The manager and the barman looked at each other, aghast. Then the manager said hurriedly to his subordinate:

"Get this gentleman anything he wants—at once!"

Nobody had ever called him that before.

CHAPTER X

I

IN the physical sense there are many Englands. There is that England which greets the traveler arriving at a South Coast port, an England of red or white cliffs; soft, springy turf; of sheep grazing on the gently billowing downs; of little towns which sprawl but yet are compact. There is the England of the West Country, a softly rolling land where narrow roads wind between high stone walls; or of Cornwall, rugged yet not desolate. There is the England of the Thames valley, a suburbanized England. Or of the Midland plain, flat and fertile, a land of orchards and farms; or of East Anglia, a windmilly, dike-and-canal district. Or of the industrial Midlands and North, where the smoke of the chimneys from Manchester to Newcastle sometimes hangs as one vast pall over the countryside and blots out the sun. There is the England of the Yorkshire moors, a surprisingly empty, barren country. Or of the semi-mountainous North; or of the Lake district, like a miniature Switzerland. And there is always the salt-water England of the seacoasts, smelling faintly of fish or of tar.

The English countryside presents a far greater diversification of aspect than do the English towns.

London, of course, is infinite in its variety; it is as true to-day as when Samuel Johnson first said it, that he who is tired of London is tired of life itself. But with the exception of Chester, Tunbridge Wells, and a few similar show places, most of the large towns of England tend to a depressing uniformity, both of architecture and of character. England hath her Babbitts not less renowned than America's.

Yet the 80 per cent urbanization of England has been accompanied by its compensations. London, it is true, tends ever to slop over its legitimate boundaries; but in the provinces bricks and mortar stop short, instead of degenerating into a vague suburban confusion before giving way to the real country.

Thus there is created for the traveler through England by road or by rail the illusion of a surprising emptiness. Mile after mile provide only their two or three figures in the middle distance, instead of the 600-odd per square mile given in the census figures. Field after field flashes past, with only a glimpse of houses vouchsafed beyond leafy screens.

These extremes of concentrated and scattered population, combined with the really extraordinary variety of landscape within the compass of this one comparatively little island, tend almost completely to banish the impression of smallness that one gets from looking at the tiny spot on the world map that represents this country. The man who has traveled from London to Carlisle receives the impression of having traversed a much greater distance than is represented on the map and has, in fact, sampled more varieties of countryside

than he who has covered ten times the number of actual miles through more monotonous territory.

Go where he may in England, the traveler will not escape the "Old World" feeling. Two thousand years of intensive occupation by white men have left their mark. The wildest bits of Yorkshire moorland heard the tramp of the legions in Cæsar's time; in this or that turnip field Lancastrian or Cromwellian blood was shed; and along these lonely coast roads horsemen have carried tidings of invasion, whether the enemy sighted by the watchers was a Norseman galley or a German cruiser. . . . An old, old, and slightly tired land; where every crooked road and irregular hedgerow has its significance, although they may seem just to have happened that way; where inns are found spaced at convenient intervals for stagecoaches, rather than for motor cars; and where field and hedge, ditch and stream, have assumed a curiously "finished" aspect. Above all, a gray land, where soft light and moist air restrain even the perspective of an occasional blazing summer's day.

II

Infinite tones of gray make up the typical English sky and background. Pearly grays, translucent grays, sodden, leaden grays, angry dark-blue grays, misty light-blue grays—the variations are without number. Just as the heavy, moisture-laden atmosphere softens and blurs harsh and discordant lines in the picture so, some people are tempted to think, does it mold the English character and speech. It is fashionable in these

days to inveigh against the soul-deadening uniformity furthered by American talkies and the "refaned," Oxford voices of the British Broadcasting Company announcers. But the wisecrack which sparkles in the electric air of Broadway falls strangely flat in the murky damp of the Strand; while extremes of speech and intonation gradually succumb to the inevitable qualifying phrases or grunts which the Englishman introduces. Heavy sarcasm makes the transition to irony without anyone being able to capture the moment of metamorphosis. Instead of calling a man a liar you accuse him of terminological inexactitude; and you preface the charge by "as a matter of fact," "after all," "more or less," or something which does not commit you too finally or irrevocably. Philologists and laryngologists may smile, but it has long been a belief of mine that the various mannerisms of speech which collectively go to make up the so-called "English accent" are due primarily to the damp, even climate, and only secondarily to racial heritage, or what not else. Likewise, is it not possible that when the Englishman reflects where the American dogmatizes, when he hesitates where the American acts, it is because the climate has made him distrustful of extremes?

III

Certainly the English climate is as baffling and as contradictory to foreigners as is the English mind. In New York and in Paris, for instance, there is a widespread impression that it always is raining in England. Yet London's annual rainfall is less than twenty-

four inches. As a matter of actual fact it doesn't rain so much here, but most of the time it looks as though it were just about to do so. The effect upon the resident may be much the same as though it really did rain interminably. The only thing lacking is the actual, physical phenomenon.

Similarly, although the thermometer shows extremes of heat or of cold to be very little experienced here, one can feel much colder on a damp winter day when the thermometer registers 40 degrees than when, in the United States, it stands at zero. A working rule is that degrees of frost (that is, degrees below 32 Fahrenheit) are roughly equivalent to degrees below zero in drier climates. Still further indications of the effects of the prevailing dampness are that nine Englishmen out of ten wear woolen underclothes the year round; that whatever the prohibitionists may think about it, it is a fact that far more "hard" liquor can be drunk regularly without ill effects in England than in a climate like that of the eastern United States; and that although the cult of heavy, stodgy food is happily no longer so religiously served as once it was, the Englishman's dietary will long remain "solider" than the American's or the Frenchman's.

With the universal prevalence of dampness in England it is curious that the means adopted for warming and drying the interiors of dwelling houses should be so far inferior, both in efficiency and in comfort, to those which the Romans introduced twenty centuries ago. The great majority of English people go to bed and get up in winter in bedrooms completely devoid of

any form of artificial heat. The average middle-class home contains one room which is reasonably warm throughout a winter day—the kitchen; one which is quite warm in the evenings—the living room; one into which a mild warmth is infused at meal times—the dining room; and the others may shift for themselves. Passages and bathrooms are usually glacial and draughty, and the winter temperature in them seldom exceeds 50 degrees. Yet the average Englishman pities the American or European who has to endure central heating, when otherwise he might be able to enjoy the boon of hot-water bottles and flannel underclothes.

IV

The most noticeable post-war change in rural England concerns the roads. Once outside the great towns, houses and lawns, fields and forests, present to the wayfarer the same aspect that they have borne for generations, or even for centuries. But the so-called arterial road is a new thing under the sun. It may be that “before the Roman came to Rye, or out to Severn strode, the reeling English drunkard made the rolling English road.” It is certain that the Roman was more concerned with the rapid movement of his legions than with Chestertonian poetry. His ideal road fulfilled the geometrical description of a straight line—the shortest distance between two points—and he provided England with a series of trunk roads which continue to form the backbone of the road system.

Fifteen centuries of individualism put a good many kinks in the Roman roads; so that by Victorian times

the highways of England turned and twisted and wriggled all over the place. Partly because such thoroughfares were grotesquely inadequate for motor traffic, and partly to prevent the unemployment figures from rising still higher, England's post-war rulers decreed the construction of new, broad highways which should disregard hills, valleys, and contours as the Roman roads did, and which should neatly short-circuit the narrow, crooked main streets of the old towns and villages. And, incidentally, they turned the white surfaces of macadam into the gleaming black ones of tarmac.

The idea was admirable, although all too many of the new roads show a tendency to develop corrugations and undulations of the witching-waves type. The creators of the arterial by-passes, however, scarcely could have foreseen all the consequences of their innovation. It doubtless did not occur to them, nor is the responsibility necessarily theirs, that their billiard-table surfaces would turn into speed tracks and death traps; or that their highways would, for a hundred years or so, stand out as raw streaks across a finished countryside. They could not anticipate that what Dean Inge calls the "bungaloid fringe" would sprout along the new arteries of communication. But be it said to their credit that at least they have avoided one shortcoming of the previous generation of road-makers—they have not cambered their surfaces so steeply that continual tugging at the steering wheel is required to keep a car on a straight course, and they have not perpetu-

ated the curious idiosyncrasy of banking the wrong side of their curves.

In these respects they have, to tell the whole story, done their work all too well. On Saturday and Sunday any arterial road in the south of England is about as rural and open as Regent Street on a busy week-day afternoon. From London to the coast the long lines of cars run radiator to tail lamp; and as very frequently the authorities decide to tear up the roads at the most difficult corners, the cars do not run so much as crawl.

Incidentally, this predilection of the English road-repairer for causing the maximum possible inconvenience to the greatest possible number of people is worthy of notice. If in London a street is to be resurfaced, it will usually be found that every alternative thoroughfare within a quarter of a mile also is "up." Another favorite dodge is to dig a street full of holes and then to go away and leave it dotted with trestles and red lamps.

Sometimes, of course, the road-menders are fooled. For instance, it was decided one spring that a by-pass road, which runs northwesterly from London, ought to be repaired. No start was made until the Thursday before the Easter Bank Holiday; but on that day the road for a distance of several miles was cut up with trenches which extended across three-quarters of its width. As the trenches started from both sides of the road, progress was rendered possible only in a series of zigzag maneuverings. Since the Easter traffic provides

one of the year's peaks on every road in England, it was obvious that the stage was all set for a holdup of traffic which later would become epic. But—Easter Sunday dawned very cold, very windy, and very wet. It happened that during the day I drove for sixty miles or so along this road, starting from and returning to London. During that time I met only five other cars, a condition which made it perfectly possible to thread the maze of trestles and red lamps at nearly forty miles an hour. I have often wondered why the road-menders, seeing the miscarriage of the almost perfect arrangements that they had made to slow up the traffic, did not forthwith give up their work in disgust.

But, in all seriousness, the death-and-accident rate on the roads here is appalling. Sheer bad driving accounts for a very large proportion of the casualties. The motor cycle still is very popular in this country and the youths who ride "motor bikes" take risks that make one's hair curl. They shoot past one on the wrong side; they cut in and out of streams of congested traffic; they flash across crossroads without the slightest knowledge of any traffic that may be concealed behind the hedges of the subsidiary road. The bad habit of certain manufacturers of motor cars of placing the gasoline tank under the bonnet, immediately over the hot cylinder block and exhaust pipes, does not exactly minimize the chances of fire following a collision. As for bicyclists, it is only within the past couple of years that they have even been forced to carry rear lights or reflectors. Before that time they enjoyed the unfet-

tered right to be killed because the overtaking motorist could not see them at night; and a great many of them were.

v

Although the British farmer is facing ruin and bankruptcy, the results of his plight are not evident to the casual wayfarer. Not often have the stone walls or hedges been broken down and a dozen little pocket-handkerchief fields been transformed into one large enough to render the use of tractors and gang ploughs economical. No farmhouses, as far as one can see, have been deserted. Roadside ditches and hedgerows have not been allowed to become overgrown with weeds or briars.

It is, of course, obvious that the English agriculturist cannot hope to compete in world markets with crops grown and harvested in the New World by the intensive use of machinery. On such items as wheat he cannot even compete in his own market without the aid of a stiff protective tariff. What he could do, and what some farmers are now considering doing, would be to return to a sort of economic feudalism, where localities of greater or less extent would produce for mutual consumption rather than for sale. Before even this can be done, however, something must take the place of the feudal overlord as a motivating force. Whether that something will be found amid the increasing breakdowns of the present distributive system remains to be seen.

VI

Post-war London demands at least a volume, if not a whole shelf of books, to itself. Yet perhaps the essential change wrought by the last decade can be at least mentioned within even the compass of this chapter, for it consists in variations upon the theme of increasing mechanization.

There has been nothing comparable to the development of the mid-town skyscraper zone in New York; the height of new buildings in London is limited by law to 120 feet. None the less, to the native the London of 1931 seems very different from that of ten years earlier. It is not only that to-day new suburbs, complete with branches of Boots' and W. H. Smith, exist where, ten years ago, cattle grazed. Great slices of central London have been rebuilt. When the war ended only a beginning had been made toward the demolition of the warm, yellow plaster façades which Nash put in Regent Street. To-day this street stands completely altered. Regency stucco has given way to near-Renaissance stone; and a thoroughfare which once possessed real character is now as conventional and ordinary a shopping street as you will find in any big city anywhere. Presumably, by way of showing what might have been done, the famous shop of Liberty's has erected in Argyll Street, just off Regent Street, a marvelous Tudor reconstruction; but they were not allowed to utilize their Regent Street frontage for this purpose.

Piccadilly Circus, once so pleasingly provincial in

view of its proud boast to be the hub of the world, has been revamped in Portland stone; and the management of the London Pavilion Theater has contributed its bit by painting that edifice a particularly bilious shade of green. Still, at long last Eros again is perched on his pedestal in the center of the Circus, and that is something. Trafalgar Square is being transformed by the erection of a huge modern building where the old Morley's and Golden Cross hotels stood. One by one the rookeries of the old Strand disappear to make way for plate glass and stone. A semi-skyscraper is sprouting behind the low walls of the Bank of England; and the narrow streets of the City resound to the clatter of pneumatic riveting machines, all doing their bit toward the provision of new office buildings whose tenants will choke those narrow streets even more effectually than they do at present. Towering new hotels have arisen in Piccadilly and Park Lane. Indeed, the latter thoroughfare very soon will be more like Central Park South than like the Park Lane of a decade ago.

Whereas in New York business marches uptown, in London it moves west, engulfing in its progress the backwaters which the Victorians either overlooked or were unable to touch. St. James's Square now is almost wholly commercial; Berkeley Square has been invaded; and Grosvenor Square is next on the list. Farther north the Bloomsbury squares have long since capitulated; Cavendish Square has been almost completely transformed; and Portman Square is in a half-and-half condition.

Along the Thames, where once there was little to

draw the eye upward (save the Savoy and Cecil hotels) between St. Paul's and the Palace of Westminster, a "skyline" is now beginning to develop; and Adelaide House in the City and Thames House at Milbank provide new end buttresses for this mass of masonry. There is also, of course, the "temporary" Waterloo Bridge. This is a steel affair, constructed in a flattened arc from one end of Rennie's Bridge to the other, and hurriedly put together when a scare arose about the imminent collapse of Waterloo Bridge. But Waterloo Bridge did not collapse, and the new structure was left in place; southbound traffic now uses the temporary bridge and northbound traffic the century-old stone structure. Perhaps, when Charing Cross Station is moved to the other side of the river, this eyesore will be removed; but in this connection it would be well to remember that the hunting preserve constructed 900 years ago, not far from the present Bournemouth, is still called the New Forest.

Yet, despite the sense of change and instability that these developments bring to the Londoner, it does not occur to most Americans seeing London for the first time that the British capital has gone modern. Visitors to the building in which I have my office (Bush House) derive no thrill from the fact that it is centrally heated, has efficient lifts, and actually contains tobacco kiosks and public telephones. But then they never arrived at their offices in the morning to find as their first task the resuscitation of an open fire optimistically constructed by a cockney charwoman with the aid of a tightly rolled copy of the *Daily Telegraph*, three slivers of kindling

wood, and a couple of hods of noncombustible coal. They have not had to make a close study of the vagaries of a lift that one can sometimes induce to operate, but more often cannot, and that has an inconvenient habit of sticking between floors until some neighbor, hearing one's remarks on the situation, sends for the caretaker. They cannot appreciate the difference between having one's afternoon tea served by neatly uniformed attendants (everyone who has an office in London succumbs sooner or later to the tea habit), and coaxing a refractory kettle to a boil over a coal fire. They cannot begin to grasp the tremendous concession involved in the permission to the *Herald Tribune* to keep its office open until four A.M. in a building where everybody else goes home and where the hot water is turned off before nine P.M. They have never possessed offices without telephones, and where candles are used not as decorations but as sources of light by which to work. It has never struck them as a reasonable procedure to send a messenger with a letter, rather than to entrust it to the mails, or to telephone or telegraph its contents. But I could take them into offices within the toss of a cricket ball from Bush House where any and all of these procedures are not only in practice but normal.

So, to the Londoner, his new theaters, hotels, restaurants, movies, shops, and offices seem dazzlingly modern. It does not pain him, as it did me a few nights ago, to discover that in a theater holding 2,600 people there is only one public telephone, and that it is out of order. It rather fills him with a sense of the passing of

the old England that in one of the new theaters there actually are little electric lights set in cunningly hooded sockets behind each row of seats, so that dropped gloves or handkerchiefs can be retrieved painlessly.

There are, of course, some innovations that he flatly refuses. Humanitarian theater managers have, for instance, sought to make all their seats bookable in advance, and thus to do away with the queues awaiting admission to the gallery and pit. But this invasion of the Londoner's right to spend four or five hours shivering in a line outside the theater in order to carry out a transaction which could be performed in thirty seconds, was not for a moment to be tolerated; the queues remain as a living manifestation of the Englishman's constitutional right to be uncomfortable.

If a system of underground railways ought to be tolerated at all, which is doubtful, London's surely should be taken as a model. The necessity for going down fairly deep into the earth (sixty feet or so) slightly slows up access to the trains, but this is a result of the geological formation under London, which at about that depth is the London Clay, an almost ideal medium to carry the tubes. Also, largely because London is not concentrated into the compass imposed upon New York by Manhattan Island, it is possible to maintain a fair average speed without double tracking and express trains.

The second Labor Government had brought forward a bill for the nationalization of London's public transport, only to have the measure die on its hands when,

in the late summer of 1931, the Cabinet resigned. Sooner or later such a step is inevitable; in the meantime the Underground and associated companies stand as models of wise monopoly. Since the war practically the whole of the rolling stock has been renewed. The new cars are well upholstered, most comfortable, and the seats have arms between them. Escalators are replacing the old-fashioned elevators in the stations. Ticket machines, which will not only produce tickets but will simultaneously give you your change, are being installed.

Moreover, this admirable institution actually has an eye for art. It secures for its advertisements some of the best poster work done in England. It experiments with pastel colorings and ultramodern jazz upholstery for its cars. It even pays attention to the architecture of its stations. And it insists upon, and secures, politeness from its staff toward the public. The result is that whereas all New Yorkers whom I know hate the subway, most Londoners have a tolerant affection for the Underground—and for London's 5,000 big red buses, which are operated by the same combine. (Except for one or two lines that have managed to sneak in, street cars are wisely kept out of central London.) The Londoner takes it for granted that he should be permitted to smoke in every car except one of a tube train; that the upper decks of his buses should be as comfortably upholstered as the lower ones; and that he should pay fares according to the actual distance traveled, said fares starting at one penny for a journey of a mile or so. What he would say if confronted by a sardine-packing

guard of the Times Square type is better left to the imagination.

There is not quite such a monopoly in the catering business. At least three large chains of restaurants and tea shops compete for the Londoner's custom, and the most ambitious of these (Lyons') also is wisely and public-spiritedly managed. Its interests range from luxury hotels to suburban tea shops. Its artistic tastes run rather more to the garish than do the Underground's, but its food is good, its service efficient, and its prices low. Not long after the war Lyons' experimented with the cafeteria and automat ideas, but decided that they were over-mechanized to suit the British public.

The terrific increase in the volume of London's traffic has been mentioned. Only modest beginnings have been made in the way of mechanical traffic control, but an extension of this system is certain to come.

As for such institutions as theaters, cinemas, soda fountains (still rare), tobacconists, and chemists, the post-war change has been analogous to that in the department stores. Much rebuilding has taken place; interiors are infinitely better arranged and better lighted; and the chemists' shops have gone at least halfway toward the American ideal that a drug store should stock everything except drugs. The one field in which scarcely any progress has been shown is that concerned with the sale of alcohol. Model pubs have appeared in the country and suburbs, but in central London the thirsty have no choice between the comfortable, although expensive, bars of the better hotels and the dingy, stale-smelling, and utterly depressing pub.

It is only since the war, also, that women really have invaded London's business world in force. Prior to 1914 the "business girl" was a subject of mild public excitement. During the war and until demobilization the staid old British metropolis became more feminized than it ever was before or since. But everybody considered that state of affairs as wholly exceptional, and women have indeed disappeared as bus drivers and tube guards, although a few very tastelessly dressed police-women remain. However, not only as stenographers and secretaries, but as everything from barristers to engineers, the women remain, and seem to enjoy their economic freedom.

Although he has a vast capacity for excitement over trivialities—for instance, over such "silly season" topics as whether girls should play tennis in bare legs—the Londoner otherwise is one of the most imperturbable members of the human species. He will hopelessly block the traffic in order to congregate in his thousands to inspect such a novelty as flood-lighting of public buildings; but in an air raid or a fog so thick that it could be sliced with a knife he will calmly continue his usual pursuits as though nothing were happening.

To me one little anecdote will always serve to epitomize the Londoner. It was in 1929 or 1930. There had been a disgraceful scene in the House of Commons; a Labor member impulsively had laid profane hands upon the holy of holies, the Speaker's great ornate and gilded mace, and had even snatched it up and started out of the House with it. Of course he was caught and "that bauble" restored to its proper place. Naturally the

late night finals of the evening papers were full of the story and newsboys were shrieking it through the yellow murk of the Strand.

About 6.30 I happened to find myself in a tube lift at Charing Cross Station, immediately behind two middle-aged men. One was trying to hold umbrella and attaché case under one arm while with the other he fumbled for his season ticket; the other passenger was reading an evening paper.

"'Ullo!" remarked the one who was reading. "D'you see this bit abaht the myce in the 'Ouse of Commons?"

"I didn't know they 'ad mice there," his companion grunted without much interest; and then turned in genuine surprise at the splutter of only half-stifled laughter behind him.

CHAPTER XI

I

THE average Englishman thinks that all American newspapers reek with sensation; that they are given to intolerable invasions of people's privacy; that their regard for accuracy is next to nonexistent, and that their headlines are written in a strange and unintelligible jargon. The average American, upon seeing a British newspaper for the first time, wonders whether the boy hasn't made a mistake and handed out a left-over copy from the eighteenth century.

Probably the newspapers, like the politicians, that nations get are those that they deserve. The fact that the American press pains and bewilders the Englishman, and that the English press produces similar sensations in the American, may indicate merely that each country desires a different type of journal. For that matter, both English and Americans might do well to reflect that there is a good deal to be said for the four-page French newspaper, where all the news that really matters is compressed into two columns of "Dernière Heure" and can be skimmed in ten minutes.

Fundamentally, the structure of the British press is, of course, conditioned not only by the background of national taste, but also by the geography of the country.

In the first place there is to be considered the almost absolute dominance of London, which at once molds and reflects the thought of England, and, for that matter, of Scotland and Wales, to a far greater extent than New York does even of the Eastern States. In the second place, few important concentrations of population in this island are more than eight hours' train journey from London. Even when London newspapers were produced only in the capital city, they could compete actively and on level terms with the provincial press. Now that they have taken to publishing duplicate editions in Manchester and even in Glasgow, they are able absolutely to blanket the whole country. Therefore, while some excellent newspapers still appear in cities outside London—for instance, the *Birmingham Post*, the *Leeds Mercury*, the *Yorkshire Post*, the *Scotsman* in Edinburgh and, above all, the *Manchester Guardian*, which is the best newspaper in England—to speak of English journalism is really to speak of the London newspapers and the provincial publications controlled by the London magnates.

Although circulations vary enormously, from the nearly two million daily of the *Mail and Express* to the quarter million or less of the *Times*, *Daily Telegraph*, and *Morning Post*, the distribution is in all cases on a national rather than a local scale. This naturally tends to impose its own standards of selectivity upon editors. Particularly, it tends to eliminate the purely local story as such, where it contains neither intrinsic human interest nor implications or connotations that are of interest outside a limited circle.

Beyond this point resemblance between the London newspapers ceases. Indeed, a stranger who on any given day happened to read successively the *Morning Post* and the *Daily Herald* might be pardoned for wondering whether the two newspapers were really published in the same city, or on the same day, for assuredly he would find that they contained few points of similarity beyond the weather report. By the time the final editions of the New York morning papers come out, their editors usually have decided that very much the same stories are important and merit display. Thus, while the rule is by no means absolute, the readers of the *Times* and the *Herald Tribune* on any one morning are likely to fold up their papers after perusal and to carry to their offices the impression that certain identical things of importance happened on the previous day. But in London it all depends on which paper you read; the news is presented with half a dozen different standards of color and emphasis.

London morning newspapers fall naturally into highbrow and lowbrow classifications. The highbrow papers are the *Times*, *Daily Telegraph*, and *Morning Post*. The lowbrows are the *Daily Mail*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Herald*, *News-Chronicle*, *Sketch*, and *Mirror*—the last two being pictorial tabloids. The three evening newspapers (*Evening News*, *Evening Standard*, and *Star*), although they are in each instance published by a firm which also maintains a lowbrow morning paper, might be described by the use of a word which has attained a certain popularity in England, “mezzobrow.”

Only two newspapers retain any great power to shape

opinion through their editorial columns. They are the *Times* and the *Manchester Guardian*. The influence of the others is achieved mainly through the exercise of an intense selectivity in the presentation of news; and the influence wielded in this manner frequently is far greater than that of the reasoned arguments of the editorials or "leaders." The *Daily Mail*, for instance, through its exclusive publication of the so-called "Zinovieff letter" in 1924, undoubtedly transformed a doubtful election into a walkover for the Conservatives.

The following extract from "Set Down in Malice," published in 1918 by Gerald Cumberland, one of the ablest free-lance journalists of his time, illustrates the point I am trying to make:

"In the *Daily Mail Year Book*, against the entry, *Manchester Guardian*, you will find these words: 'The best newspaper in the world.' Now, you would imagine that if the *Daily Mail* really believed that, the *Daily Mail* would strain every nerve to be as like the *Manchester Guardian* as possible. But Lord Northcliffe knows better than that. He knows, as we all know, that the best newspaper in the world is not going to be the best seller in the world. The word 'best,' when applied to a newspaper, does not signify a newspaper that shrieks louder than any other newspaper, that has the greatest number of 'stunts,' that lays reputations low in the dust, that holds Cabinet Ministers in the hollow of its hand. It signifies, among other things, a paper whose editor will not sacrifice a single ideal in order to increase his circulation, who has the power of infusing his staff with his own enthusiasms, and who regards the arts as a necessary part of a decent human existence.

"The *Daily Mail* once upon a time compelled the whole

of the British Isles to start growing sweet peas. That is the kind of power that the *Manchester Guardian* does not possess."

The highbrow papers of London are, as might be supposed, all conservative in their politics. The *Times*, after a period of apostasy under Northcliffe, has returned to orthodoxy. It has an announced policy of supporting whatever government may happen to be in power, but its support of Labor governments is always lukewarm and of Conservative governments enthusiastic. The *Times* has infinitely the best service of foreign news in England; it is the recognized forum for "letters to the editor"; its "personal" or "agony" column on the front page remains a joy and a delight; and it maintains its attitude, magnificent in these days of competition, that nothing can really be considered to have happened until the *Times* has recorded it. Apparently it causes the *Times* neither embarrassment nor loss of prestige to print a news item two or three days after the other papers have done so. On the other hand, important news of an official character has a habit of getting into the *Times* first of all.

To "write to the *Times* about it" long ago achieved fame as a music-hall joke on both sides of the Atlantic. Irreverent Americans, however, still delight in the flavor and variety of the "Thunderer's" correspondence columns. The letters all begin so austere: "To the Editor of the *Times*, Sir:" but in the concluding salutations individuality runs riot. There is the "Colonel Chutney, V.C." type, who concludes, "I enclose my card, Sir, and have the honour to remain." There is the

conventional "Yours truly" or "Yours faithfully." Now and then there is an Old World touch of "I have the honour to remain, Sir, Your Obedient Servant."

The correspondence columns are at their best when some correspondent starts, wittingly or unwittingly, a hare that is coursing by readers from Cape Town to Kamchatka. Thus, in the summer of 1931 a correspondent in Kenya Colony furnished the *Times* with a thrilling account of his escape from an enraged gorilla, and in the course of his narrative he mentioned that the animal, in charging at him, covered a distance of fifteen paces in approximately one second. Now, a good many things were happening during that summer. Germany seemed about to be disintegrating, President Hoover was making his Debt Moratorium proposal, a British Cabinet was resigning. But not until well into October did the correspondence over the gorilla languish. Readers who knew all about gorillas wrote to the *Times* to say that no gorilla could jump like that. Other readers who had made intensive studies of the home life of the gorilla replied that this was nothing to what *they* had seen gorillas do in '78. Physicists contributed elaborate formulæ to show that the jump under discussion was possible or impossible, as the case might be. The question was raised concerning the accuracy of the clocking and measuring arrangements of the Kenya correspondent. It was inquired whether the gorilla was jumping up hill or down hill. It was suggested that he must have been a Carnera among gorillas. Numerous correspondents tried to sidetrack the debate to topics ranging more or less from the taxation system of

Kenya to the necessity for a more intensive laboratory examination of the laws of acceleration as applied to the lower fauna. And when it was all over the original correspondent again wrote to the editor to inform him that, although the distance of the gorilla's jump had been measured, the figure of one second elapsed time for the jump had been arrived at merely by guesswork!

Following is the *Times'* own listing of the letters appearing in its columns on October 21, 1931; and the list, it might be added, is typical:

The Election (Sir Montagu Webb, Mr. E. J. Parkinson, Mr. A. Bryant, Lord Bearstead, Mr. H. C. Mills, Mr. H. Myers, Sir Charles Tyrrell Giles, K.C., and others).

"The Facts for Electors."

Cycling for Long Life.

Coal Export Trade (Sir Richard Redmayne).

"It Ought to be Possible" (Sir Amherst Selby-Bigge).

Edison and Colonel Gouraud.

The Manchurian Dispute (Mr. H. Wilson Harris).

Agra and Oudh (Shaikh M. H. Kidwai of Gadia).

Australian and British Income Tax (Lieutenant-Commander G. C. F. Boranson).

Mistaken Economy (Mr. H. V. Roe).

Winter in England.

Exchange Restrictions.

Points from Letters: State Control of Shipping; Votes Lost by Removals; Dogs Killed by Motorists; Foreign Secretaries; Wise Spending; An International Currency; Winter in Lakeland; Women and the Elec-

tion; Changes in the Calendar; Rents and Prosperity; The Nature of the Universe; The Storing of Walnuts.

The *Morning Post*, as the organ of the Diehard Tories, is remarkable chiefly for its firm distrust of democracy and for its willingness to express it. Jews, Bolsheviks, Irishmen, and the British Labor Party are the especial objects of the *Post's* dislike; and it is not very fond of Americans, having been quite a flourishing paper when the Colonists began to kick over the traces in the first instance, having even then disapproved of this disruptive tendency and having been reasonably certain that no good could come of it. The *Post* is a magnificent Bourbon survival, like a witty and caustic old dowager.

The *Daily Telegraph*, the third of the highbrow group, is now the property of one of the great newspaper combines known as the Berry chain. The *Telegraph* has neither the semi-official character of the *Times* nor the bright intolerance of the *Morning Post*; it is a solid, dependable, middle-class newspaper, well written and able to attract contributors of the highest caliber.

The four lowbrow papers are bright, chatty, amusing, inconsistent; and, to the extent that their great popularity may mirror the mental standards of Englishmen, depressing. The *Mail* has the largest daily circulation in the world, although the *Express* is not far behind it. Much of the circulation of the lowbrow papers depends upon the free insurance which they give their readers, who by the mere fact of subscribing receive insurance against almost everything from

tonsillitis to death in a train wreck. Drivers of motor cars in London have, on occasion, blamed this free insurance "stunt" for the obviously increasing suicidal tendency of pedestrians, who presumably are out for a glorious death and £250 or so to the next of kin. Death in a train wreck is much better, as it yields £10,000; but there aren't many train wrecks in England.

Newspaper finance here is curiously involved and interlocking, with rival "press lords" owning substantial minority interests in each other's ventures. Broadly speaking, however, it may be said that the *Mail* and its evening edition belong to Lord Rothermere and the *Express* and its evening paper to Lord Beaverbrook. Hence the coinage of the phrase "the Beaver-mere press" to describe the papers of these groups. Lord Rothermere is a brother of the late Lord Northcliffe. He has not a fraction of the Northcliffe newspaper genius, but he is considered to be a very capable financier. The *Mail* reflects its changed proprietorship. Lord Beaverbrook is a bit of a financial wizard, but he is also a most clever politician, an able speaker, and a man of ideas and vision. The *Express* has sometimes suffered as a newspaper through its proprietor's tendency to chase his hares through too many of its columns. On the other hand, Lord Beaverbrook shows his real cleverness by giving free rein to David Low, the best cartoonist in England, who repays the compliment by caricaturing his own employer more mercilessly than he does anyone else.

The mental attitude of the *Mail*, as reflected in its

news and editorial columns, is that of the late '90's. There is no differentiation between mild liberalism and anarchy, between Socialism and Bolshevism. The British workingman is a fine fellow, as long as he touches his cap to his betters and remembers his place. Britannia rules the waves. "Stand up! The Hun is at the Gate!" "They will cheat you yet, those Junkers!" Five thousand pounds for an election forecast!! "U. S." stands not for "Uncle Sam" but for "Uncle Shylock"!! Hats off to France!!! For King and Country!!!! Britons Never, Never . . . Send him victorious, happy and glorious . . . Should girls wear socks? . . . India, the brightest jewel in his Majesty's Crown. . . . Amazing Scenes Among Bank Holiday Crowds. . . .

"Some British sailors, in the light-hearted way that is their habit, have gone too far. However good-humoredly it may be done, a refusal to obey orders in his Majesty's Fleet is a grave occurrence. . . ."

And the public buys. "Good old *Dilly Mile*" it remarks approvingly, and turns from the leading article which castigates it for its lack of reverence toward the squire and his relations to "Robin Goodfellow" and the Newmarket selections.

The *Express* is slightly more subtle. Its news columns are not quite so tendentious, its editorials not so banal.

The *News-Chronicle* is the result of the process of attrition that has gone on among London's Liberal newspapers since the war; it is all that is left of the *Daily News*, the *Daily Chronicle*, and the *Westminster*

Gazette. This newspaper and its evening edition, the *Star*, are sometimes referred to as "the Cocoa Press," the allusion being to the commercial activities of the Cadbury family. In their news columns the *News Chronicle* and *Star* are a little less bright and "stunty" than the *Mail* or *Express*; and their editorial policy is characterized chiefly by a holier-than-thou attitude that unfortunately seems inseparable from political Liberalism here.

The *Daily Herald*, the fourth morning newspaper with a huge circulation, is the organ of the Trade Union Congress and the Labor Party. For years during and after the war the *Herald* struggled along pathetically, a propaganda sheet whose editors could find capitalist plots in everything from the vagaries of the weather to the movement of the exchanges. A couple of years ago it made its peace with Big Business, swung into line on free insurance, and began to publish pictures of bathing beauties undressed to the legal limit. Its circulation promptly tripled, and it began to add to its staff, at huge salaries, writers from rival papers that it might the better preach the gospel of equality for all.

II

Once again, these newspapers obviously could not succeed unless there were a persistent public demand for them. The logical deduction, therefore, is that their methods of sifting and presenting the news and their editorial policies must commend themselves to their readers. And, indeed, there is much independent evidence that this is so.

The American prefers headlines that tell him what the story is about. He is accustomed to finding the salient points of the story in the first paragraph. He likes full names, addresses, ages, dates. The Englishman, on the other hand, likes to have his news broken gently. His preference is for vague headlines such as "Remarkable Incident" or "Amazing Scenes." He would prefer that the story didn't get into its swing too early. For instance, when Communist troops occupied Shanghai a couple of years ago, one of the high-brow papers the next day began its Shanghai dispatch as follows:

(By Our Special Correspondent)

Shanghai.—China is the most awful country I ever was in. To-night neither I nor anyone else has the slightest idea what has happened to-day.

The way then was cleared for a column and three-quarters telling what did happen.

It also is taken for granted that a man mentioned in the news presumably has a first name, a home, and an age; but why worry about them when plain "Mr. Jones of Tooting" will do as well? Life is too short for such unessential details. The foreign visitor involved in a motor-car accident was not Cyrus P. Boggs, 57, of 1458 Lakeside Avenue, Podunk, Ohio, U. S. A.; he was a Mr. Baggs or Boggs, presumed to be an American.

The preference of many American newspapers for a certain objectivity in their news columns is seldom reflected in the British press. When the *Daily Stunt*, for example, is running a campaign against a general elec-

tion, it will announce as a statement of fact that the sentiment of the country is strongly behind its own policy. When the *Daily Scream* simultaneously is agitating in favor of an election, it will announce with equal positiveness that the sentiment of the country is strongly *against* the *Daily Stunt*. This transference to the news columns of an editorial outlook is considered rather old-fashioned in some other countries; and indeed even in England it has been carried so far recently that the one London evening newspaper, which is not quite so violently partisan in its news columns as the other two, has had the doubtless gratifying experience of printing dozens of letters from new readers who opposed its politics but who applauded its fairness in the presentation of news.

The attitude of the English newspapers toward American ones is as amusing as are the professional relations between rival country weeklies. Thus, when Louis Weitzenkorn's "Five Star Final" was presented in London under the Anglicized title of "Late Night Final," it was well received as a work of dramatic art; but few critics could refrain from pointing out with a certain smug satisfaction that of course the methods of the American tabloid newspapers were completely unknown in England; "that sort of thing would never do with us." It may be recalled that this play dealt chiefly with the suicide of a woman who was driven to kill herself through the action of a tabloid newspaper in raking up an old scandal about her. It was particularly unfortunate that before the play had finished its London run, its action was almost duplicated in real life in

a town not sixty miles from London! The *Morning Post*, at any rate, was sufficiently frank to devote half a column of its issue of October 13, 1931, to the story of the inquest upon Mr. Walter Applegate, a hairdresser, of Hove, Sussex, who, shortly after the death by poisoning of a lady who had been friendly with him, "committed suicide while of unsound mind." One witness testified that Applegate "told me he had been driven to absolute distraction by the press reports." Another, the chief inspector of the local police, "added that Mr. Applegate had complained bitterly to him that the press representatives had been continually annoying him. The previous day they had been in the back yard, climbed over the back wall at midnight, and banged on the door. They had been ringing the bell of his front door and had driven him almost out of his mind."

In accepting the suicide verdict the coroner said:

"I can't help the feeling that some of his worry was due to the unnecessary interference of the Press. It is one thing to gather information of a useful character, but it is another thing to hunt a man and lose all sense of proportion and reason. . . . If the Press have any comments to offer, they have plenty of opportunity of offering it in the Press."

The Press preferred not to comment.

III

It should not be inferred that the newspapers of great circulation have things all their own way in England. They and their proprietors are continually satir-

ized in books, upon the stage, and above all in the six-penny weeklies.

These weeklies constitute a phase of journalism which has seldom flourished in the United States. The *Nation* and the *Outlook* are the outstanding American examples of the type. London, however, manages to maintain half a dozen, not more than one or two of which can be profitable commercially. With the exception of the *Spectator* and *Saturday Review*, which are stanchly Conservative, these weeklies provide the acid solvent in the flood of printers' ink with which Britain is ceaselessly drenched. In the *Week-End Review*, *New Statesman and Nation*, and *Time and Tide*, the confident and blatant generalizations of the daily press are subjected to calm, if not always impartial, scrutiny. The dogma of the moment is examined for what it is worth.

Such journals exercise an influence out of all proportion to their circulation. They reach and are read by the people who count. Their reviews of books, plays, concerts, and art exhibitions are not for the million. Their financial columns are objective and skeptical; and they even can describe new motor cars without too many superlatives to the paragraph.

IV

Since the war the American influence has made itself very strongly felt in the British magazine field. Such institutions as *Punch*, the *Graphic*, or *Illustrated London News* retain their old characteristics, but the fiction

magazines, the women's journals, and the fashion papers have changed greatly. They have adopted American methods of make-up and display. Many of their stories and articles originate in the United States and are sugar-coated for the British public by the elimination or translation of obvious Americanisms. Very many of the advertisements show a distinct American influence; but some of the brighter and snappier ideas of the American copywriters have, unfortunately, been found merely to depress or to bewilder—sometimes both—English readers.

Generally speaking, one gets the impression that England is more of a newspaper-reading and less of a magazine-reading nation than is the United States. Certainly there is little here comparable to the American weekly or monthly fiction-and-special-article magazine. On the other hand, there exist in England a great number of small and highly specialized periodicals, dealing technically with everything from ship-operating to raising mushrooms.

v

A survey of English post-war literature fails to indicate tendencies or characteristics of which one can say "This, or that, is typical." Even "de-bunking" did not become epidemic here. During the post-war decade England naturally was well in the forefront of the production of memoirs and diaries of all ranks from field marshal to private; and from time to time these exhibited the tendency to disillusionment which began gently enough in C. E. Montague's "Disenchantment"

and Philip Gibbs' "Now It Can Be Told," and which finally culminated in the realism of Blunden, Graves, Aldington, and a score of others, not to mention Remarque, the German, who was, perhaps, most popular of all. But these efforts were balanced by the gusto of the Churchills and the generals.

In fiction it did not seem that new stars of the first magnitude had appeared. A. S. M. Hutchinson could sweep the board with "If Winter Comes"; but who mentions Hutchinson to-day? R. H. Mottram could publish the extraordinary achievement that the "Spanish Farm" trilogy represents; but Mottram's later works no more equal this one than Sheriff's subsequent effort on the stage equaled "Journey's End." Any number of others scored moderate successes; most of their names are nearly as well known in the United States as in England. The fact remains that the fiction writers who dominated the 'twenties were those who dominated the pre-war years: Galsworthy, Bennett, Wells, Conrad, Walpole, Chesterton, *et hic genus omne*.

In the field of biography, Lytton Strachey and Guedalla were not exactly newcomers; no other writer (save for Drinkwater and Shaw, if their historical plays can be called biographical, and these men certainly are not novices) equaled their popularity. A. P. Herbert and A. A. Milne have turned out some charming light verse; they do not pretend that it is anything more. Post-war England has not seemed to have much time for poetry of the more serious sort, although the intelligentsia were ready to stop momentarily to listen to a Masefield or a T. S. Eliot.

Among dramatic authors one at least has proven himself to be of the first rank and of amazing versatility—Noel Coward. This young man, who was not of age when the war ended, has turned out amazingly good light comedies, farces, revues; and will some day write plays which will not require his additional skill as lyric writer, composer, actor, and producer to assure him lasting recognition. Meanwhile there is Shaw, who has produced some of his best work since the war. The rest are a long way behind.

VI

Since 1918 the British stage has drawn heavily upon other countries for its material. For a long time American plays predominated among those imported; but for the last few years the fashion has shifted to German and central European productions. Musical comedy and revue have for the most part remained depressingly all-British. Despite the lack of outstanding dramatic material by British authors, the standard of acting has remained very high; public interest in the theater does not seem noticeably to have waned; and new theater buildings are continually springing up in London's West End.

For the first ten post-war years American dominance of the motion picture or "cinema" theater was almost complete. This, of course, led to bitter complaints about the Americanization of England; and it was finally prescribed by law that every exhibitor must show a certain proportion of British films. The coming of the "talkies" facilitated the task of the British producer,

since the American voice as reproduced by them was distinctly less gratifying to British audiences than were the motions of American actors in the silent films. Also, curiously enough, Continental talkies have seemed rather more popular in England than the Continental silent pictures.

Nevertheless, the British film industry has a good many handicaps to overcome, both financial and technical. I cannot forget that while crossing to New York this year I saw on board ship a pre-release of a new British talkie. I waited a reasonable time while a fisherman walked down a Cornish village street. Then I went out to the bar and had a drink. When I returned the same fisherman was still walking down the same street!

VII

Wireless broadcasting is controlled by the British Broadcasting Corporation, a semi-governmental monopoly. Listeners can, of course, tune in to foreign stations; but no one may broadcast in this country itself without the permission of the B. B. C.; and except for experimental purposes, no one does.

A primary result of this situation is that radio in England is a much more powerful instrument for reaching the people and for influencing their tastes or habits than it is anywhere else in the world, with the possible exception of Russia. There exists here no multiplicity of stations offering indiscriminately sonatas and toothpaste, politics and pills. The B. B. C. does not permit advertising material to be broadcast from its trans-

mitters, but pays its expenses by charging a license fee of ten shillings a year for each radio set.

From the point of view of the sensitive listener, the absence of "blurbs" is all to the good. On the other hand, the lack of competition forces one to take what the B. B. C. offers, or do without—unless, of course, one has a set on which foreign stations may be received. But—and here is where the rub comes in—the British politician, scientist, musician, or writer is wholly dependent upon the monopoly. Unless he satisfies its directors, he cannot "go on the air."

One need not enter into the perennial controversy as to whether the B. B. C. is impartial, or enterprising, or artistic, to realize that a greater attribute than any of these, that of monopoly, confers upon this semi-official organization the most far-reaching powers. This is particularly marked as regards political broadcasting. Owing to its largely official character, the voice of the B. B. C. in thousands of small homes has come to be regarded as the voice of the government itself. If, therefore, the speakers of one political party are allocated more broadcasts than those of another; or if the representatives of minorities are completely refused a hearing on the ground of their numerical unimportance, a wireless monopoly becomes a weapon of incalculable potency.

Whether the B. B. C. does in fact exercise its powers wisely is not for a foreigner to judge. Somebody or other is almost always making charges of favoritism; but on the other hand the corporation does not lack defenders among the general public. Nevertheless, the

outsider may be permitted to wonder whether the existence of alternative channels for reaching the public would not automatically exempt the B. B. C. from much of the criticism it now receives.

CHAPTER XII

I

LOCAL police courts, in default of more scientific methods of ascertaining drunkenness or sobriety in specific cases, still sometimes require their victims to attempt to pronounce the words "British Constitution." However difficult such an achievement may appear to the man attempting it, it is not to be compared with the task of describing the Constitution itself.

In the first place, although libraries have been written about it, there have been eminent authorities to uphold the contention that there is no such thing as the British Constitution. They mean, of course, that there exists no document or set of documents concerning which it can be said with accuracy and finality, "This is the Constitution." Commenting upon de Tocqueville's denial that England has a Constitution at all, Sir Maurice Amos, in his admirable handbook upon "The English Constitution," remarks aptly:

And indeed, if it were not the case that we invented both the name and the thing, this doubt would have something to be said for it. It would, however, be absurd to say that England, of all countries in the world, has not got a Constitution. What we have to recognise is that it is not a necessary character of a Constitution that it should consist of a formal and precise code of laws, made and change-

able in a manner peculiar to themselves. With us, the boundaries of the Constitution are set by a certain type of political sentiment, what we may call the "constitutional sense" of the nation.

And in another passage he points out:

No English court of law could refuse to enforce a statute on the ground that it conflicts with the Constitution. Parliament could, if it chose, repeal, in its next session, Magna Charta, the Bill of Rights, and the Act of Settlement. It could abolish itself, King, Lords, and Commons, and hand over the Government to the Trade Union Council or the League of Nations. . . .

The author might, however, have gone farther and pointed out that the King could, if he chose, veto every such act of Parliament. To the objection that this undoubtedly would cost the King his throne, one may reply that such a program as the extreme one facetiously outlined above by Sir Maurice would cost Parliament its existence.

Thus, while all sorts of improbable things could be done in England in a perfectly constitutional fashion, they are, as a matter of fact, not done at all. The checks and balances in the British Constitution are none the less real for all their sometimes nebulous character. Perhaps the best brief summing-up of the position that has been made recently is that of Lord Hewart:

. . . it seems true to say that, although theoretically the King in Parliament is the legislative sovereign and the King in Council the executive sovereign, in reality the whole legislative power and the whole executive power are

substantially vested in the Cabinet, provided only that it is able to command a majority in the House of Commons.

II

The average man in the street is apt to go even farther than this and assume that for practical purposes the popularly elected House of Commons is the only ruling body of the country. This is broadly, but not wholly, accurate. The Crown and the House of Lords still possess power of a sort; and although King George during the early years of his reign seemed to exercise his prerogative scarcely at all, it is a curious fact that as the post-war period lengthens and the theoretical powers of democracy increase, there are observers who think they detect a considerably more vigorous exercise by the King of his advisory functions. Likewise the House of Lords, although severely limited in its scope by the Parliament Act of 1911, has of recent years so enthusiastically utilized its ability to delay legislation that had the Labor Government of 1929 been allowed to live out its full life, it is highly probable that the "Lords versus people" cry would have formed one of Labor's chief electoral arguments.

In these days it is chiefly when a change of government is impending that the King seems to the people at large to fulfill something more than a purely decorative function. The possible life of a British Parliament is five years; but in England, as on the Continent, there remains the convention that no Cabinet should survive a parliamentary vote of "no confidence." As a matter of fact this convention was repeatedly disregarded by

both minority Labor governments, but the Opposition was usually not sufficiently coherent to force the issue. When it acquired the necessary determination, as on the vote of confidence over the Campbell case in 1924, the Cabinet resigned.

A resigning Prime Minister has the right to ask the King for a dissolution of Parliament and a general election; or he may advise his Majesty to send for the leader of the Opposition to form a government. The King seems to have an equal right to disregard either or both requests. As a matter of general practice, he does not usually do so, but King George has not invariably been governed by convention. For instance, when the late Andrew Bonar Law resigned as Prime Minister in 1923, there was a Conservative majority in Parliament, and the obvious successor to Bonar Law was Lord Curzon, leader of the Conservatives in the Lords. Lord Curzon was actually summoned to Buckingham Palace, only to be told that his Majesty had decided to ask Mr. Stanley Baldwin, who was not then a particularly conspicuous politician, to form a government. It was generally assumed that the King found himself in agreement with the widespread belief that the Prime Minister should be a member of the House of Commons; but present-day politicians do not divulge their conversations with his Majesty. In any event, it is certain that Lord Curzon went to the palace in the belief that the choice was to fall upon him, and that his subsequent disillusionment was the greatest of his life.

During the political crisis of 1931 the King was credited with having played a considerable part in the

formation of the National Government. When Mr. MacDonald resigned, it was believed that he would advise the King to turn to Mr. Baldwin. There is a popular impression to the effect that he did in fact do this, but that the alternative of a National Government was suggested by the King, as preferable to a purely partisan one.

The House of Lords has not for twenty years had power to amend or reject money bills; while other legislation which it may reject can, after an interval of two years, be passed by the House of Commons alone. There does not seem in these strictly limited powers possessed by the Upper House a *prima facie* case for the reform or abolition of the Lords; and as a matter of fact the practical working of the arrangement is reasonably smooth. A democracy not infrequently discovers that the things that so excited it two years ago are no longer of great import; on the other hand, there is no possibility that an assembly not responsible to the electors should permanently thwart the people's will. Perhaps the worst thing that could happen to the Lords would be an attempt by the Tories, under the guise of reform, to restore any of the old powers of the Upper House, or to confer them upon a slightly democratized assembly.

III

Whatever survivals of their ancient power the Crown and the Lords may have managed to retain, the fact remains that to all intents and purposes the country is governed by the House of Commons. As will be shown

shortly, the 615 members of this body do not necessarily reflect the exact state of political opinion prevalent in the constituencies; but as an assemblage they are extraordinarily sensitive to the prevailing mood of the people. Only by impeachment can the President of the United States be removed from his office. The political life of a British Prime Minister depends from day to day upon his ability to prevent more than 307 members of the House of Commons from expressing their lack of confidence in him. As a matter of actual practice such a development occurs comparatively seldom, and invariably only when there has been a definite shift in public sentiment; but every innocent-looking question propounded by a back-bencher to a junior minister is nevertheless full of potential dynamite.

The severest strain that has fallen since the war upon the House of Commons as an institution has resulted from the decay of the two-party system. Strictly speaking, of course, there were more than two parties represented in the House throughout practically the whole of the Victorian period. But for all practical purposes the country for nearly a century before the war made its choice between Liberal or Conservative, Left or Right.

The break-up, in 1922, of the war-time Coalition, and the subsequent emergence of the Labor Party as a major political force, introduced a troublesome complication both into the elections and into parliamentary procedure. In the constituencies it became possible for a candidate to be elected, not because he had secured an actual majority of the votes cast, but because he re-

ceived more votes than any other single candidate. Thus, in a constituency containing 30,000 voters, Mr. A. might get 12,000 votes and Mr. B. and Mr. C. 9,000 each. Clearly Mr. A. was the choice of less than half the electors; 18,000 out of 30,000 people definitely did not desire to be represented by him. But as an even greater number objected to Mr. B. and Mr. C., Mr. A. went up to Westminster.

The theorist well might inquire why something wasn't done about it. Why shouldn't there have been adopted some such device as proportional representation, the alternative vote, or the second ballot?

The answer, such as it is, lies in the incurable optimism of politicians. The party in power got the "breaks" in the luck last time; why shouldn't it get them again? The parties in opposition usually are enthusiastic about electoral reform; but when they take office they forget about it. Beyond this superficial reason there has been the vaguely realized fact that under any system in which Parliament might accurately reflect sentiment in the constituencies, no party during the post-war decade would have enjoyed a clear majority in the House of Commons. Two elections, those of 1923 and 1929, actually did produce this result, and in both instances Labor Cabinets functioned with Liberal support. In neither case, however, was there a formal coalition; and in both the Liberal support was eventually withdrawn.

In 1930 it began to occur to the Labor leaders that the conditions of the election of 1924, when scores of minority Conservative candidates were swept into office

by a relatively small and highly emotional turnover of votes, might occur again. They therefore developed a sudden passion for electoral reform, which took the form of the introduction of an Alternative Vote bill. No party really liked this measure, since none of the organizers had the slightest idea what would be the result of voting by first and second choices. The Liberals favored Proportional Representation; but since Labor would have none of it, and since the Liberals disliked the prospect of a dissolution even more than they did the Alternative Vote, they combined with Labor to pass the bill. The House of Lords, as everyone anticipated it would, slashed the measure to bits. The Labor leaders thereupon shelved the bill, hoping to resurrect it at a later date as an argument for House of Lords reform and, had they but realized it, they also locked away their chances for the next election.

For the improbable happened, and in 1931 the Liberal candidates in hundreds of constituencies were withdrawn, leaving straight fights between Conservatives and Labor men.

What was the result? The National Government parties polled 14,539,403 popular votes, and returned 554 members to Parliament. Labor, throughout the country, amassed the respectable total of 6,648,023 votes, but got only 52 seats!

In one sense this election did break the long post-war deadlock, because in it the Conservative Party alone secured an actual majority of the popular votes cast. Even the Conservatives, however, did not seek to conceal the fact that Labor, the second largest party, was

dangerously under-represented. At this time it still is far too early to predict whether or not the Conservatives themselves will carry through some electoral reform measure. This much, however, safely may be said: the longer the delay in rationalizing the present electoral system, the stronger will grow that impatience with parliamentary institutions which has swept so much of the post-war world, but which in England has accumulated only slowly. It does not matter that in the final analysis a great revulsion of popular feeling may upset a government without the formality of an election; what rankles in the hearts of the "outs" of whatever party is the feeling of unfairness, of inadequacy of the electoral machinery.

Some political observers have thought to discern in the events of 1931 the signs of a break-up of the party system as such and the development of political groups on the Continental model. They have pointed out that the present House of Commons contains one Conservative, two Labor, and three Liberal parties; and have suggested that the Conservative Party, the largest single group, in reality contains at least two factions. There are others who, admitting the growing unreality of the old party labels, see the 1931 election as presaging a return to the old two-party system, with its traditional division between conservative and radical.

IV

These things are for the future to decide. In the meantime, the factor which, in my opinion, has done most to preserve the institution of parliamentary gov-

ernment in England has been precisely this lack of correspondence between party labels and achievements. That the whole British political system has shifted definitely toward the Left cannot for a moment be denied. The party calling itself Conservative to-day cheerfully passes legislation which thirty, or even twenty, years ago would have seemed dangerously radical.

Some cynic has remarked that Socialism will come to England only when and as the Conservatives introduce it. The prediction contains at least as much truth as epigram. The two factors that ultimately dominate all British politics are finance and the existence of universal adult suffrage. No government, whatever it calls itself, can disregard either. Thus, one has the spectacle of Conservative Chancellors of the Exchequer continuing cheerfully to tax the wealthier classes on a scale unknown anywhere else in the world; of the final two great steps in the enfranchisement of the population being granted by predominantly Conservative administrations; of the extension of old-age pensions proudly being put into effect by a Conservative Prime Minister.

And two definitely socialistic pieces of legislation sponsored by Conservative governments were the creation of the broadcasting monopoly and of the Central Electricity Board. Indeed, there was offered in the *Week-End Review* of November 7, 1931, an amusing criticism by Mr. Herbert Morrison, Minister of Transport in the late Labor Government, of the Conservatives on the ground that they were wedded too closely to nineteenth-century Socialism! At this point one is reminded of the London subeditor who, some years ago,

inserted in a dispatch from Washington a reference to the Monarchist Party in the United States. When questioned by his chief he pointed out that the original dispatch had mentioned the Republican Party and its opponents. If the opponents of a Republican Party weren't monarchists, what were they?

v

If party labels, then, are not to be trusted unreservedly, who are these men who govern England, and what are they? The question was answered, for the Parliament elected in 1931, by Professor H. J. Laski, who published in the *New Statesman and Nation* the following analysis:

<i>Members' Vocations</i>	<i>Number</i>
Rentiers	165
Business men	111
Lawyers	136
Accountants	8
Soldiers and sailors	43
Farmer-landowners	15
Teachers	11
Bankers and financiers	47
Doctors	14
Retired civil servants	5
Journalists	15
Brewers	5
Trade-unionists	32
Others	8
 Total	 615

A further analysis of the vocations of members of various parties produces the expected result of show-

ing the preponderance in the Conservative Party of rentiers, business men, lawyers, military men, and bankers. The two Liberal groups have a majority of business men and lawyers. In the Labor Party the trade-unionists predominate heavily.

It will be seen that party membership therefore tends roughly to follow business and social status. There are, of course, important exceptions to this rule. The Labor Party contains definite groups of "intelligentsia," and of more or less wealthy men. The Conservatives can count upon the support of domestic servants and agricultural laborers, both classes whose interests would seem superficially to coincide more closely with those of the Labor Party. In general, however, it would not be too inaccurate to say that the support of the three main parliamentary groups—Conservatives, Liberals, and Laborites—arises from the upper, middle, and lower classes, respectively. It is further the case that the middle and lower classes, when frightened as in 1924 and 1931, seem almost instinctively to turn to conservatism; while there also exists a body of perhaps two or three million "floating" voters upon whom no party can count with certitude.

The conservatism which, from time to time, offers refuge to the timorous seems nevertheless to become steadily more and more diluted. Efforts to set back the clock of social progress become both less frequent and less strong. Doubtless in their innermost hearts a great many Tories harbor regretful memories of a golden age when the working classes knew their place and stayed there; when the income tax was just high

enough to elicit mild grumblings; when one could be Kiplingesque and take the thin red line and the boys of the bulldog breed seriously. The great majority of them have the sense to treasure this Elysian vision as a sentimental memory of times that will not come again. Aside from a few Diehards among the aristocrats, it is mostly the middle class that talks old-fashioned Toryism over its tea tables, or in Parliament.

Liberalism, from being at one time a radical philosophy, now has become a halfway house for those who have progressed beyond Conservatism but hesitate before the final stages of the journey to Labor. In the various Liberal camps are also congregated men who are more reactionary than most Tories and men who are more advanced than most Laborites. No longer united even by the shibboleth of free trade, the Liberal parties seem doomed to eventual extinction; or at least to ineffectiveness.

Starting as a gesture of social protest, the Labor Party within the space of thirty years grew to be the second largest in the country. Labor has never yet had a clear parliamentary majority, although in 1929 it came close to it by securing 288 of the 615 seats in the House. In 1931 the Conservative landslide swept all but 52 of the Laborites out, but the party even then polled nearly 7,000,000 of the 21,000,000 popular votes.

Singularly enough, there is much that is distinctly conservative in the record of Labor in office. The lugubrious "Red Flag" may be sung at campaign meetings, and the Socialist New Jerusalem foreshadowed in "Labor and the Nation," the party's official program.

It is nevertheless greatly to be doubted whether any substantial portion of the Labor Party would consider as desirable or tolerable the pure Socialist commonwealth outlined by Shaw in "The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism." The philosophy of the Labor Party must always be a distributive one; the party must perforce take the side of the multitudes who, in every capitalist civilization thus far developed, have received a disproportionately small share of the national income. But when the test of office came, the Labor leaders did not see fit to express their pacifistic philosophy in any more drastic snubbing of the military services than any Conservative Cabinet would cheerfully have undertaken; nor, in 1931, were the party chiefs willing to back the philosophy to which they had sworn allegiance for a lifetime against the warnings of avowedly capitalistic bankers.

VI

If one studies the record of the six administrations that have governed England since the Armistice, one scarcely can fail to be struck by the essential similarity of the problems that have arisen; and by the almost equal similarity of the efforts to solve them. Yet two of the six Cabinets were Conservative, two Labor, and two Coalition.

The Coalition Government elected in December, 1918, with the Liberal David Lloyd George as Prime Minister and a predominantly Conservative House of Commons, was naturally occupied during its first years of office with liquidating the more immediately trouble-

some aftermaths of the war. Nevertheless it was not long before, in every field of its endeavor, the brakes began to be applied upon the natural exuberance of certain of its members. Any idea that may have existed about continuing the war, but against Soviet Russia, was promptly abandoned; and two years later when, rightly or wrongly, large sections of the public feared a war with Turkey, the Coalition fell. In the meantime this government had agreed to naval equality with the United States, had facilitated the establishment of the Irish Free State, had set the precedent of paying generous doles to the unemployed, had inaugurated subsidized housing schemes, and had definitely carried over into peace-time budgets the relative incidents of taxation established during the war-time emergency.

The Conservative administration of Andrew Bonar Law which succeeded the Coalition produced as its most noteworthy measure the funding of the American war debt. When Bonar Law resigned and was succeeded by Stanley Baldwin, the latter already had formed the idea that a protective tariff for British industry was the country's outstanding requirement. The country did not at that time agree; and in 1924 Labor, although the party had a minority in the House of Commons, took office for the first time. Those who expected anything revolutionary to ensue were promptly disillusioned. Philip Snowden's first budget was hailed, even in the City of London, as a very sound bit of work; while Ramsay MacDonald preferred to indulge his flair for foreign politics rather than to venture into rash domestic legislation. Toward the discontented coal miners,

already feeling the pinch of the rising value of sterling and dismayed by the prospect of huge shipments of German reparations coal, the Labor Government certainly showed itself no more complacent than did the Conservative administration which followed it. And while it is true that the MacDonald administration established full diplomatic relations with Russia, it was the Coalition that had negotiated the first trade agreement with the Soviets.

The Baldwin Government, with its tremendous majority received when the *Daily Mail* made the country's flesh creep by publishing the much-debated Zinovieff letter, might have been expected to put an end to apostasy. As a matter of fact, within a year it was bribing the miners, by subsidizing them out of public funds, not to strike! When the subsidy was exhausted, during the spring of 1926, the miners did strike. And the cumulative discontent of the working classes against the failure of all the politicians to lift the country out of the post-war depression (coupled, very probably, with the fact that the Trade Union Congress had perfected a nice machine and wanted to see how it would work), was precipitated in the general strike.

Nothing could have been more tactful than the government's handling of what undoubtedly was an explosive situation. Naturally, special constables were sworn in and an effort made to maintain vital services; armed troops were even called out. But on neither side was a single shot fired. The London police, with admirable impartiality, gave precedence to food trucks guarded by soldiers in tin hats and to side cars bearing

placards to show that they were official vehicles of the Trade Union Congress. High Tory employers of strike-breaking laborers sent out cups of hot tea to the Trade Union pickets outside their gates. I do not mean to imply that the affair was by any means a love feast; but it was conducted with exemplary restraint; and when the government triumphed, as it was bound to do, and some foolish employers began to talk about crushing the Labor people once and for all, it was Stanley Baldwin, Conservative Prime Minister, who saw to it that the King immediately broadcasted an appeal against victimization.

The Baldwin Government came in for a good deal of abuse over its handling of the Three-Power Naval Conference of 1927 at Geneva. It happens that I was in fairly close touch with the day-to-day events of that Conference, even to the extent, five minutes after the final session had broken up in disagreement, of being allowed to purchase Mr. Bridgeman a whiskey-and-soda in the bar of the Hotel des Bergues, and of accepting from him a cigar which was distinctly of eight-inch, rather than six-inch caliber! I wrote then (as I think now) that the British delegation was rather lamentably ignorant of the American psychology of the moment, rather out of date in assuming that the trade routes of the oceans must all be guarded by British warships. But never, at any time, did I observe any trace of deliberate anti-Americanism, or of what justly might be termed aggressiveness; and when I returned to London I found, as I had rather anticipated, that nine people out of ten didn't even know that there had been a

Conference at all! Nor do I see any reason to assume that the agreement finally reached in 1930 might not have been equally well reached had a Conservative Government then held office.

Concerning the country's economic position, the Baldwin Government's measures were scarcely dissimilar to those of its predecessors—or, for that matter, to those of its successor. They consisted mostly in prescribing pills for an earthquake. No tenderness to the upper classes was shown in Mr. Churchill's successive budgets. The dole continued to be paid.

Nor, in the field of domestic legislation, did the MacDonald Government, which took office in 1929, do anything very drastic. It wasted a good deal of time over the academic question of the legality of general strikes; and it continued, just as any other government would have done, to pay the dole to the increasing number of people thrown out of employment by the development of the world economic crisis. It is true that Mr. Snowden proposed to revive the taxation of land values; but his proposals to this effect were more irritating to Tory tempers than they seemed likely to be to their pocketbooks, since it was an open question whether there would not be more land wholly or partially exempted in effect from the operation of this tax than there would be subjected to it. And the Labor Government proposed the highly socialistic measure of centralizing London's passenger traffic undertakings under governmental control; a project which probably will be put into effect by the National Government now in office!

It remains only to add that, beyond voting an emergency budget in nine-tenths of the provisions of which Labor concurred, the so-called National Government that succeeded Labor in the autumn of 1931 achieved two remarkable feats during the brief period between its formation and its reconstitution. It handled a near-mutiny in the navy in the good old no-nonsense-about-it fashion; that is to say, it granted the greater part of the men's demands and agreed to overlook their lapse from discipline. Secondly, having been formed to "save the pound," it looked on with a considerable degree of complacency while the pound slipped gracefully off the gold convertibility which, somehow, it had preserved under Labor.

VII

During the post-war years there has been a considerable amount of criticism of Parliament on the score that it is antiquated and generally inefficient. A more or less typical example of these complaints appeared in the *Daily Mail* of June 9, 1931, under the signature of Commander J. M. Kenworthy, who was himself at that time a member of the House of Commons:

For getting anything done that matters Parliament is hopeless. Parliament still attempts to carry on under a procedure that may have been well enough in the eighteenth century but is utterly impractical in the twentieth, with budgets of £800,000,000. If any commercial company attempted to do its business as we do at Westminster, it would be forced into liquidation within a year. . . . The country is governed by the permanent officials,

and our finances are managed by the Treasury. . . . Everything is settled on party lines and never on its merits, except by accident. . . . Private bill legislation is cumbersome and horribly expensive. . . . The real work of government is done outside the Chamber either by discussion *sub rosa* between the leaders of the parties, or in "Conferences," or in the anterooms of the Whitehall offices. . . . If the British brand of democracy is to survive, our Imperial Parliament must once more control major policy and finance, and leave minor issues to other bodies. . . . If we drift on as we are doing, the Parliament system will come to a violent end.

Concrete evidence can be brought to substantiate every one of these charges; yet the fact remains that no movement to abolish or to transform the parliamentary system has gained the slightest headway in England. Welsh and Scottish Home Rulers, British Fascists, Communists—all have wielded only a negligible influence. One is tempted to explain the evident paradox by the suggestion that Parliament's strength lies in the sum total of its weaknesses, the implication, of course, being that the parliamentary institution is so inextricably bound up with the interests of so many different classes that it is extremely difficult to secure any widespread measure of assent to its abolition. For instance, Commander Kenworthy, as the sitting member for Hull, was annoyed because the project to build a bridge over the Humber was being delayed by legal wrangles in committee. But there were lawyer members sitting for other constituencies who doubtless thought it a fine thing that the legal profession should be employed, however expensively, in sifting the Hum-

ber Bridge project. Again, a Scottish member may complain bitterly that the House empties of English members when the Scottish estimates are under discussion. On the other hand, he finds it quite useful to have the support of English Nonconformists when Prayer Book Revision is being debated.

And so it goes. For eight hundred years the roots of the parliamentary institution have been extending through the subsoil of English life. The present-day English business man finds it intolerable that he should have to secure parliamentary sanction for some commercial project which, as he will explain to you, is quite obviously desirable and even urgent, on the face of things. Yet, when it is proposed to divert a 'bus route so that it no longer passes his door, what more natural than that he should seek his M. P. in double-quick time, and have a parliamentary question asked about it? And should that answer prove unsatisfactory or evasive, will not his M. P. wag an admonitory finger at the Minister of Transport and inquire solemnly whether, arising out of that answer, the right honorable gentleman is aware that the diversion of this 'bus route constitutes a violation of Magna Charta, the Bill of Rights, and the inherent liberties of his Majesty's subjects; and will he furthermore—? And finally, should the House really take the matter seriously, will not forty members put their names to a motion for the adjournment of the House, so that at 7.30 that evening other affairs of State may be dropped while his Majesty's faithful Commons settle the matter of Mr. Smith's 'bus?

Ordinary parliamentary procedure is slow, wasteful, cumbersome, inefficient, and sometimes even grotesque.

But in Parliament, as in many other English institutions, provision is made for short cuts in case of real urgency. No dictator can act more quickly than the Mother of Parliaments when she decides to hurry.

It might quite reasonably be supposed that clever politicians would learn how to employ these short cuts so consistently that the result would be a virtual short-circuiting of the deliberative power of the House. But that possibility also was foreseen a few hundred years ago. The House to-day will grant a ministry virtually dictatorial powers to act through Orders in Council (which means that since the Privy Council is purely a formal body, the Cabinet can do pretty much what it likes) ; but these powers are granted for a week or a month only and must, at the end of that time, again be justified before the whole House.

Obviously, Parliament still has a trick or two up its sleeve. This is not to say that reform is not needed, for it is. And doubtless reform will come in due time. Procedure will be altered to correspond more closely to present-day needs ; some method of delegation of minor matters will be found ; and the House of Commons certainly will have to be chosen by some system which assures minorities of more adequate representation. Yet one ventures to think that it will be a long time before the great gilded mace on the Speaker's table is replaced either by a dictator's fasces or the Communists' sickle and hammer.

VIII

The fact that a parliamentary candidate need not necessarily live in the constituency for which he elects

to stand probably tends to endow any Parliament with a greater initial coherence than otherwise might be the case. It also facilitates the retention in Parliament of a nucleus of experienced politicians, and makes it possible to find a seat for a man who obviously ought to be in the House, but who would stand no chance of election from the particular district in which he may happen to live. And, as a matter of fact, perhaps the simplest and most useful parliamentary reform that could be carried out would be the abolition of individual constituencies altogether and the allocation of seats in the House to parties on the basis of their nation-wide vote.

The physical arrangement of the palace of Westminster also is not without its importance. In the first place, its location in the center of the country's commercial metropolis tends to deflate the sense of self-importance felt by the member of a legislative assembly which (as in Washington or Canberra) meets in a city which is a capital and nothing else. The salary of an M. P. is only £400 a year (less, while the emergency "cuts" of 1931 remain); and the only thing that he gets in the way of perquisites or patronage is a season ticket to his constituency—not mileage! Inside the House Chamber the member sits, not at a desk, but upon a long upholstered bench which holds nineteen of his fellows. If he is notorious as an absentee the House, which is very jealous of its traditions and its procedure, will not listen gladly to him when he desires to speak. In many respects the newly elected M. P. is rather in the position of a new boy in school who will do well to walk warily and say little.

Obviously, there is a case to be made out against the selection of such comparatively unimportant men, by such a hit-or-miss system, for the task of governing an empire. . . .

When in that House M. P.'s divide,
If they've a brain and cerebellum, too,
They've got to leave their brains outside
And vote just as their leaders tell 'em to.

And yet—government by experts has its limitations. I have known too many experts, real and self-styled, to be sanguine about their governing abilities. Treasury experts, legal experts, military experts—they are admirable in the Civil Service, but the atmospheres in which they operate are just a little too rarefied for the ordinary man, who, after all, is the chap who has to be governed.

IX

When it is charged that "the country is governed by the permanent officials," the real accusation is that the Civil Service can mold Parliaments after its heart's desire, and that it can secure the passage of legislation which is so confused, so obscure, that its eventual interpretation and application will devolve upon the government departments concerned. There is more than a little truth in the allegation. Cabinets come and go, but the permanent officials remain. They have nothing to hope or fear from parliaments. They have the advantage of specialized knowledge against the general knowledge of the M. P. or Cabinet Minister. In a

groove as regards salary, advancement, and social status, they naturally turn to the exercise of power. It is tempting to the lazy or not very bright Cabinet Minister to be able to present the House with a short bill empowering the Home Secretary to make such regulations as his Majesty in Council may direct; and to leave the rest to his permanent officials. He does not have to defend his bill clause by clause, line by line; does not have to "mug up" on all sorts of boring details. Yet that way danger lies, both for the Minister and for the officials; and especially for the latter, because such toleration as they are accorded rests largely upon their reputation for remaining outside of party politics. If the civil servants are going to play the party game, it is inevitable that they will be forced to assume the risks of that game; and of these the foremost is the one that frightens them most, a highly uncertain tenure of office.

X

The business of local government in England occasions far less excitement than it does, for instance, in the United States. Doubtless one reason for this lies in the fact that in this country the central government performs so many functions which elsewhere are delegated to local authorities. There is thus no possible comparison between (say) the New York State Legislature and the Middlesex County Council.

The appointees of local governing bodies in England regard their positions as permanent ones, without regard to the political complexions of the Councils. Town

clerks, borough surveyors, medical officers, police chiefs, dog-catchers—these do not shift after each election. And since apprenticeship in local government is by no means a passport to service in national government, the professional politician wastes little of his time in the former field.

There exists in British politics no parallel, not even an approximate one, to the position occupied by the Governor of an American State. The nearest possible one would be the position of a Lord Lieutenant of a county; and his office is both largely formal and at the disposal of the central government. The office of Mayor or Lord Mayor of an English city confers no very great power; and indeed Greater London, as distinct from the old City of London, has no mayor at all.

At present the essential function of the local bodies consists in the imposition of local rates and taxes for the upkeep of such services as those of public health, roads, fire departments, education, and a multitude of others. But even here the position is complicated, since the finance of the local councils, the county councils, and the government is inextricably intermixed. There are specific grants from the central exchequer toward particular expenses, such as those of hospitals, schools, and roads; and general grants to be applied to local government as a unit.

In general, therefore, the chief bone of contention, as far as local governing bodies are concerned, is whether under Socialist administration there should be high taxes to provide for generous expenditure upon social services; or whether under Conservative admin-

istration (in local politics the Conservatives often call themselves Municipal Reformers) such expenditure shall be kept down. By virtue of the financial help it affords, the central government under certain circumstances claims the right to suspend local officials, or even to cause them to be imprisoned. And in a few cases, where the payment of local unemployment relief has been on a particularly lavish scale, recourse has been had to the latter expedient.

XI

Finally, to adjudicate upon the administration of the statute law and the far older common law there exist the British courts, which have achieved the transition between the pre-war and post-war periods to the accompaniment of comparatively little alteration.

From time to time investigators from other countries carry out profound researches into the workings of the English legal system which, together with the general public tendency to law and order, they find admirable. They then go home and recommend the adoption of this or that reform, oblivious of the fact that in order to reproduce the English philosophy of law-abidingness you would have to reproduce England itself. For it is about as reasonable to expect English jurisprudence to function efficiently in Mexico, for instance, as it would be to expect a Rolls-Royce-trained chauffeur to get eighty miles an hour out of a wheelbarrow.

The fact should scarcely need emphasis that neither English law nor the English legal system are to any greater extent divinely inspired than any other. Indeed,

to a reasonably open-minded layman, the Code Napoleon well might seem an instrument better calculated adequately to regulate human behavior than would the amorphous mass of the common law. It is merely that centuries of trial and error have shaped the English system into a device which answers fairly well to the demands made upon it.

The whole fabric of English life is woven into a pattern of adjustment of individual appetites and ambitions to the point where they cease to infringe too seriously upon those of other individuals. This point admittedly shifts up and down the social scale. When most of the laws were made by the landed classes, crimes against property were as savagely punished as those against the person. When, after the Reform Bill, Parliament began to fill with representatives of industry and trade, the change was reflected in the legal system. As the bankers gained strength the "blue sky" laws became more severely enforced. When, and if, Labor takes office with a clear majority, there is no reason to suppose that the statute books will not bulge with laws reflecting the class bias of the new rulers.

"But," say the sentimentalists, "once made, English laws are enforced. They do not permit their laws to be flouted as Americans do the Volstead Act."

Not always. The Inns of Court squeak and gibber with the ghosts of unenforceable laws which never have been repealed. Normal present-day life in England would be intolerable, not to say impossible, if even an attempt were made strictly to enforce the law of the land as such. There existed until 1930 a law forbid-

ding the operation of a motor vehicle on any highway in the kingdom at a speed greater than twenty miles an hour. I, for one, never took my car out without breaking this law, nor did millions of my fellow motorists. Yet as long as we exercised reasonable care both in driving and in avoiding speed traps arranged by an ambitious rural constabulary no policeman thought of molesting us; and if, on our way to the Derby, we dropped below thirty miles an hour on certain roads the police came and hurried us up.

In this affair the attitude both of motorists and police was typical. Both realized that the law was a silly one; that speed was only one factor, and not necessarily the most important one, in determining whether or not a car were being operated dangerously; and that Parliament, when it got the time, would certainly sooner or later pass a better law. So the motorist speeded up; the policeman looked on benignly; and, sure enough, Parliament did.

On the other hand, where an existing law clearly is considered reasonable, or even tolerable, by public opinion it is enforced up to the hilt. In the case of what one might term "political law" (for instance, legislation relating to the political activities of trade-unions) such enforcement usually has the result of keeping Parliament tinkering away at the law, as one party or another secures a majority. On the other hand, the laws of sedition and treason remain in such a vague state that the law officers of the Crown can enforce them when it seems desirable, but that they do not seem to flaunt themselves in the face of the public.

In the domain of criminal law there is more unanimity. The majority of Englishmen simply do not approve of murder or burglary and prefer that convicted murderers or burglars be hanged or incarcerated as rapidly as may be. It is true that people sign monster petitions for the reprieve of convicted murderers but, on the other hand, there are usually growls of protest when, after prolonged examination, a murderer is found guilty but insane.

Into this phase of the English character sentimentalism enters scarcely at all. Public sentiment helps the police to apprehend the criminal. It permits magistrates or judges to refuse bail when they see fit. It does not tolerate interminable challenges to potential jurymen, changes of venue, frivolous objections and delays in court by defending counsel, or the postponement of the infliction of sentence. Judges are appointed for life, subject only to removal at the King's pleasure; they are well paid (the standard salary being £5,000 a year, although certain temporary cuts were introduced in 1931); they already have made their mark as lawyers and know all the tricks of the trade; and they are supposed to keep out of politics. Sometimes they are pensioned; but if court calendars get congested the judges are called from their retirement to sit again without extra pay. If they are ennobled and become law lords they are liable to service in what is for all practical purposes Britain's Supreme Court.

The divinity that doth hedge a king is scarcely comparable in England to the divinity that doth hedge a judge. The English laws of contempt of court are the

most savage in the world. Nothing except murder is as certain to get you into trouble in England as is the casting of aspersions upon a judge's ability, fairness, or disinterestedness. It does not matter that a judge may have betrayed the most manifest bias (it sometimes, although seldom, happens that he does); a higher court may reverse his decisions, but the public generally must keep off the grass.

In all fairness it must be said that the present generation of judges comparatively seldom affords ground for complaint. "That nisi prius nuisance, the judicial humorist," as W. S. Gilbert called him, is not extinct; and when my lord is pleased to be facetious, the court laughs. But the average English judge seems to the outsider to hew as closely to the line of impartiality as is possible in this imperfect world.

It is in the sphere of civil litigation that the English legal system seems to the layman most inefficient and most cumbrous. The laws of property, of contract, of libel—these suffer from the lack of clear codification and from the dead hand of precedent. They suffer also from the enormously increased expense of post-war legal procedure. The result is that to an increasing degree poor men are refraining from taking their troubles to law. This disinclination to litigate is obviously furthered by the division of the legal profession into solicitors and barristers; and the necessity for the layman to state his case first to a solicitor, who charges him for his advice; and then, through the solicitor, to a barrister, who tells him whether his case stands any

chance in court—and also charges him. It is a *faux pas* to attempt to consult the barrister direct in the first instance.

The post-war years undoubtedly have witnessed an increase in obedience to law. A number of prisons have been closed because they are no longer required, and in those that remain there is none of that overcrowding so prevalent in American prisons.

Little attempt has been made in England to treat the prison as anything other than what it is. The general public reads with amazement of the liberties permitted prisoners in some American institutions; and, probably, on the whole, reads also with disapproval.

The foreign resident who thus far has managed to keep outside his Majesty's prisons obviously cannot speak with personal authority upon the conditions prevalent inside them. It should be recorded, however, that such allegations of brutality or "third degree" methods as are made here from time to time against the police or the prison authorities are comparatively mild ones. Whether the average English criminal goes unarmed because the police carry no firearms, or whether the reverse is the case, would be difficult to decide. Concerning this general subject, some interesting testimony was furnished recently by Mr. Alexander Patterson, one of his Majesty's prison commissioners, following a tour of American penal institutions:

In regard to their prisons the Americans are very precise in detail but very vague in principle. They may intend to mend broken lives, but they are tempted to place too

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much reliance on securing famous men as wardens and on huge buildings. They try to achieve spiritual results by practical means. . . .

When visitors ask to see our English prison system, I say I am not sure that we have a system, but we have a prison service and a Borstal service. In the States they do not attach the great importance we do to having the right men and women in the prison service. . . .

The American prisoner is a very different person from ours. He really is tough. He can hate, and very few of our men know how to hate. I think if they had some such system as we have of voluntary workers and teachers visiting them they would not be so tough. . . . The danger in our prisons is that the man who came in as a criminal may go out as a prisoner, whereas the American criminal remains a person and not a prisoner.

CHAPTER XIII

I

IT says a good deal for British trade and industry that they have survived not only the war and the peace, but even the post-mortems so assiduously carried out upon them. Yet, while they have survived, they have not necessarily flourished and their post-war vicissitudes have really dominated Britain's national life.

Several shelves of books exist to answer the question, "What is wrong with British trade and industry?" You pay your money and take your choice. If you are a Conservative you will find economists to tell you that the standard of living is too high among the workpeople. If you are a Socialist you can find authorities who hold precisely that the standard of living is not high enough. If you are a manufacturer you can put the blame on the bankers for forcing a premature return to the pre-war gold standard. If you are a banker you can blame the manufacturers for inefficiency. If you are a free-trader you can point to the multiplication of tariffs in the post-war world. If you are a protectionist you can deride the outworn fallacies of Cobdenism.

Being none of these in any dogmatic sense, I venture the hesitant suggestion that the real trouble with British trade and industry lies in the fourth dimension: that

the British people, together with most of the rest of us, are trying to perpetuate a system of nineteenth-century economics in a distinctly twentieth-century world.

The coming of the machine found England a mercantile, but not in any essential sense an industrial, nation. I do not think that there exists reasonable doubt that the population of this island in 1800 could have fed itself, had the rest of the world, by some catastrophe, suddenly been engulfed. Without going into the question of the number of acres of arable or pasture land necessary, under the most favorable conditions, to provide sustenance for 45,000,000 people, it is a fact that to-day the soil of the British Isles cannot be made to produce sufficient food for the people who live here. Undoubtedly the 60 per cent of the nation's food which, in normal times, is imported could be reduced to a figure considerably lower. It could not be wiped out.

If this hypothesis be accepted as accurate, it follows that the prosperous, stodgy, and dividend-drawing Victorians were, in actual fact, the perpetrators of the greatest gamble in history. They did not, of course, realize what they were doing, but they committed not only the prosperity, but even the very existence, of their children and grandchildren to the maintenance of a system whose continuance depended upon the permanence of conditions which previously had not existed. The machinery of this system began to creak fifty years ago, as other nations learned the lesson of the Industrial

Revolution. But by this time two safety valves had been developed. The surplus wealth that had accrued to Britain through the fact of her arrival first in the industrial field had been partially invested overseas, and dribbled back both as dividends and in the shape of repeated orders for British goods and services. Finally, there was the refuge of emigration to the United States and the Dominions, where there was always a living to be made.

No man can say how long the British system would have lasted had the World War not taken place. One may suggest, however, that growing competition, as advances took place in technical knowledge and as the sparsely populated spaces of the earth filled up, would sooner or later have made a conflict inevitable and perhaps it would have been even a worse one, from the humanitarian standpoint, than that of 1914-1918. In actual fact the World War did take place; and England still is trying to make up its mind what to do about it.

This process already has undergone several phases. The first, in the immediate post-Armistice years, was a sort of "Don't notice him and perhaps he'll go away" attitude. The second was one of resignation to less cake and more bread-and-butter. Britain would continue as before, if rather less profitably. The third was one of semi-despair; of wonderment whether, after all, the old system hadn't better be scrapped; and this coincided with the high-water mark in the Labor Party's fortunes. The fourth attitude, which exists to-day, con-

sists in an effort to see whether the essentials of the old system can be retained on an empire-wide, instead of a world-wide, basis. That this will bring its own problems, other than those of organization and tabulation, is scarcely yet apprehended.

II

On one point the great majority of post-war economists have found themselves in agreement.

The only practicable means of ensuring a satisfactory volume of employment for the industrial population under reasonable conditions is to secure and maintain a sufficient flow of exports to overseas markets, including under the term exports not only material commodities, but also those immaterial services which are sometimes called "invisible exports."¹

We are a small island, crowded with a population of 46,000,000, of whom about 80 per cent live in towns or urban districts. We have under existing conditions to import about 60 per cent of our food. . . . We are enabled to pay for these imports partly because we are a great industrial and exporting country, but since our commodity exports alone would be insufficient—very largely because . . . we draw an income of some £195,000,000 from the rest of the world in banking, insurance, and other commissions; and because, by the investment of our past savings abroad, we have built up large foreign assets, from which we draw each year in interest about £270,000,000.²

¹ Report of the Committee on Industry and Trade, 1929, otherwise known as the Balfour Committee.

² Report of the Committee on Finance and Industry, 1931, otherwise known as the Macmillan Report.

The inference is therefore that the situation which now faces British trade and industry differs in degree, but not in kind, from others that have arisen in the past. But in the reports cited above, as well as in much other post-war economic literature, one finds also set out the opinion of a minority which holds that the classical remedies for improving sick industries are merely pills for an earthquake. Translated from the polite verbiage of minority reports and dissenting opinions, the Socialist argument runs something like this : "You are a set of old fogies, and your remedies are about as effective as bows and arrows against machine guns. Your Victorian Age is dead as the dodo. We are up against a set of world conditions that had no existence whatsoever during the years that Britain prospered under your system. We must Socialize ourselves or perish."

III

Before going farther it might be as well to have some precise data on the problem; yet not too precise, for even official statistics are tricky things.

An axiom accepted by practically all economists is that no country, any more than any individual, can live permanently beyond its income; and the balance of trade therefore becomes of practical interest as a barometer of the nation's commercial health. In the following table are given the Board of Trade's figures : *

* Statistical Tables, H. M. Stationery Office, Command 3737.

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	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930
	(In Million £)						
Excess of imports of merchandise and bullion	324	384	475	390	358	366	392
Excess government payments overseas.	25	11	...	...	...	...	...
Total	349	395	475	390	358	366	392
Government receipts from overseas .....	...	...	4	1	15	24	21
Net national shipping income	140	124	120	140	130	130	105
Net income from overseas investments ..	220	250	285	285	270	270	235
Net receipts from short interest and commissions	60	60	60	63	65	65	55
Net receipts from other sources	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
Total	435	449	484	504	495	504	431
Estimated total credit balance	86	54	9	114	137	138	39

(The figures for 1928, 1929, and 1930 are corrected from the Board of Trade *Journal* for February 26, 1931.)

In regard to several items, these figures, although official, are admittedly only approximate; but they are generally accepted at their face value as indicating that even during the post-war years Britain as a nation has been paying its way. By the time 1931 was half over it was possible to form a rough idea of the fact that the final returns for that year probably would show a deficit.

Yet such figures, indicating that Britain has contrived to pile up year by year a steady, if not exciting, surplus are distinctly misleading if considered without reference to other facts. There is contained in them no suggestion that at no time since 1920 has the number

of unemployed people receiving benefit in this country been less than 1,000,000; and that in 1928 and 1929 it rose steadily to nearly 3,000,000, before dropping slightly as a result of the abandonment of the gold standard and of the adoption of new administrative regulations. There is no hint of the terrific burden of taxation; of the fact that all too many post-war budgets have been balanced by the inclusion of "unconsidered trifles" and odds and ends of governmental assets. In 1913 the visible adverse balance of trade was only £158,000,00; and the counterbalancing "invisible exports" £339,000,000. During the post-war years Britain has paid her bills less by means of exports, and much more by drawing on her overseas reserves.

It is of course probable that a not inconsiderable portion of the apparent unemployment in certain industries—shipbuilding, iron and steel, engineering—arises because these industries were over-expanded during the war. With the post-war slump they contributed to the unemployment registers many workers who would not normally have considered themselves as industrial throw-outs. None the less the fact remains that in these industries, and in such other ones as coal mining and the textile trades, the post-war percentage of unemployment has remained far above that of British industry as a whole.

Put in the form of a generalization, this means that it is precisely the great staple industries of England that have been hardest hit. Nor are the reasons far to seek. Increased tariffs, currency fluctuations, boycotts,

increased competition, antiquated equipment and methods, faulty financing—all these adverse factors have come into play. Changes in the economic habits of other countries, such as the substitution of oil or water power for coal, and changes in fashions, such as the replacement of cotton and woolen goods by artificial silk, have made themselves felt. Undoubtedly the fixation of production costs at a comparatively high figure through the return to the gold standard at the pre-war parity, was also an adverse factor.

Britain, as a great manufacturing nation, is affected not only in a special sense by developments adverse to her particular economy, but also very markedly by world movements. Thus, the world slump of 1929 and the following years struck at this country with double force. The impoverishment of those nations which formerly had been Britain's good customers led to a drop in British exports; while simultaneously it entailed a very considerable reduction in the payments of interest and commissions from overseas. Something had to give way, and that something turned out to be the pound sterling; with what results no man can foresee.

Certainly, if the events of the earlier stages of the slump furnish any guide, British policy again will be one of muddling through. The real incidence of the world economic crisis began to be felt at a period more or less coincident with that of the election of 1929, in which Labor just missed securing an actual working majority. Nevertheless, while Labor had only 288

members of the House of Commons, instead of the requisite 308, it is arguable that if the party leaders had embarked upon a really bold program of industrial reconstruction (whether they called it socialism, state capitalism, a five-year plan, or what not), they would have been able to draw a not inconsiderable measure of support from both opposition parties. But the Labor leaders were timid. They pottered around the fringes of the problem. They wasted time over academic discussions of the legality of general strikes when they might more profitably have been seeking to make strikes unnecessary, rather than possible or impossible.

The Balfour Committee pointed out that the question of the "efficiency" of British industry can scarcely be considered apart from considerations of cost. In other words, after the deflation of 1920 the question arose, not whether it was desirable that British industrial equipment should be rendered more efficient, but whether it would be profitable. This naturally reduces to the argument that Continental industry was largely able, during periods of currency inflation, to pay off its capital cost in depreciated currency, and to start fresh; whereas from 1920 to 1925 the interest burden on British industry was steadily rising in terms of gold. The process was very agreeable to the rentier class, but scarcely helpful to the industries themselves.

In 1929 and 1930, when nobody visualized the abandonment of the gold standard, the rationalization

of British industry admittedly presented almost insuperable problems. However much he might deplore the chaos caused by unrestricted competition, wasteful duplication and overlapping, and a too-conservative habit of mind, the manufacturer as an individual would have found the capital cost of the rationalizing process prohibitive; while not all of the industries already subjected to the rejuvenating process seemed to have benefited by it.

So the vicious circle was complete. Industry could not reorganize because it could not get the money; it could not get the money because the rentiers were not willing to write down the capital they had already invested, and because the banks had no mandate to throw good money after bad. Nobody knows whether drastic governmental intervention would have met the case. To have been successful it would have had to wipe out a good many existing fortunes and terminate the payment of a good many existing incomes. It may be that the British public was not ready for such a step; that the emergency had not yet arrived to justify cutting through the complex of private interests which were throttling the industrial organism. The fact remains that Labor did not put the matter to the test of measures of practical Socialism. It hesitated between two philosophies; and while its inertia was only that displayed by the average man before problems he does not understand, the electorate exercised its divine right of inconsistency and emphatically repudiated the Labor Government, retaining, by a strange irony of fate,

three of the politicians who had been most timorous and vacillating!

IV

If Labor had no planned national economy, no reorganization of the productive machine to offer, although many individuals, both Socialists and others, have suggested such plans, the other parties were not far ahead of it. The Liberals indeed had grandiose development schemes, but they involved an immense addition to the nation's debt burden. The imagination of the Conservatives throughout the post-war period was limited to demands for a protective tariff. It was the pressure of external events that turned British industry and politics, fourteen years after the Armistice, to exploring the possibilities of cultivating the Imperial garden and letting the rest of the world go hang.

In the last analysis it is probable that countries such as France and the United States could feed their populations, if on a less generous scale than at present, from the resources of their own territories and their overseas possessions. So, for that matter, could England. But whereas the United States is relatively self-contained, and France's main lines of communication are short, England's granaries lie far over the seas; and in England of the present day there exists little will to exploit overseas possessions by force, if need be. In the long run England undoubtedly would adopt such a policy before declaring national bankruptcy, and an unmistakable preliminary indication of this truth was

furnished in the hardening of Conservative opinion in regard to Indian self-government when, in the autumn of 1931, the economic position at home grew worse.

In the meantime, however, another tack is being tried. Having abandoned the idea of political control over the Dominions, the British people now are investigating the possibilities of a community of economic interests.

Superficially the case for closer economic co-operation within the Empire is immensely strong. On the one hand there is this highly industrialized island; on the other, the great potential sources of food and raw material. What more reasonable than that this specialization of functions should be stabilized throughout the Commonwealth?

One seems to recall that this same question was being asked 150 years ago, with the American colonies substituted for the Dominions; and that on the part of the colonies the answer was a reasonably decisive negative. To-day, the absence of any suggestion of concomitant political domination completely alters the circumstances under which the query is put. The "closed system" is being offered to the Dominions, not as a threat or as an imposition, but simply as a matter of good business. They are requested to consider whether, in the long run, they would find it more profitable to continue in the world scramble for industrial self-sufficiency; or whether they would not rather benefit by the existence of a guaranteed market for their primary products.

When the last Imperial Conference was held in Lon-

don, Britain could offer only a one-sided bargain. The Dominions wanted a protected market in England for their food products and their raw materials—a market which obviously could be provided only through the imposition of food taxes or a thoroughgoing quota system applied to British imports. The Labor administration then in office was willing to flirt with the quota, but not to such an extent as to cause enthusiasm among the Dominion representatives. The very mention of the words “food taxes” sent shivers up the spine of every politician in England except Lord Beaverbrook who, being a realist, felt that even taxed food would be better than no food at all. It was not until the crisis of 1931 that this psychological barrier collapsed; and even then, as a matter of fact, it did not so much collapse as disintegrate. By common agreement (or common impulse) the Labor and Liberal politicians who supported the National Government asked the electorate not for the power to impose tariffs upon imported food, but for a “free hand” and a “doctor’s mandate.” Even those foreigners who had had considerable experience in probing for the realities underneath the platform effusions of the politicians, could not but be amazed at the perfection with which the farce was played. It did not greatly matter to the electorate, most of which apparently saw through the game, but felt that it would be more decent to introduce tariffs under the camouflage of mandates, and free hands, than to produce them naked and unashamed. And, for that matter, I am quite willing to believe that the politicians who used these phrases, hypocritical as they

seemed, actually were convinced that they had by no means made up their minds on the tariff question; and that to-day they are firm in the belief that after the election they approached the tariff with open minds. The capacity of the English politician for self-hypnosis is illimitable.

In any event, the Dominions now know that England is willing to "talk turkey." Whatever its outcome, the 1932 Imperial Conference can start its discussions on a realistic basis.

An incidental point, but one, perhaps not without significance, concerns the especial attention that has been paid in England during the last few years to the improvement of inter-imperial communications; and especially to the development of long-distance aviation. If in the not too distant future the Colonial or Dominion merchant can be enabled to order his goods from London by telephone, and to receive them by air within two or three days, there will have been provided an argument not lightly to be overlooked in favor of his purchasing British goods.

Some economic imperialists even envisage an eventual resumption of large-scale emigration to the Dominions as a means of easing the pressure of population at home. In the past, periods of economic prosperity usually have coincided with a rising birth rate; and if this again were to prove the case, the effect of such emigration would eventually be negatived. But the development of contraceptive appliances and the spread of birth-control propaganda through all sections of the population has introduced an incalculable

factor into all such speculations. It does not follow that if England achieves a period of industrial prosperity, the Victorian philoprogenitiveness would return.

v

Even taking an optimistic view of the future, it scarcely seems likely that anything like the halcyon nineteenth century will come again to England. No matter how much the pound is devalued, the burden of debt and of taxation will remain terrific for years to come. With returning prosperity the working classes will demand to be allowed to share the profits, either directly in the form of higher wages, or indirectly in the form of social services paid for out of taxation. Finally, even taking the most roseate view, the field for expansion in empire trade is scarcely commensurate with that which existed when the field was the whole world, and when Britain's technical, financial, and transport supremacy was unchallenged.

If, under the stimulus of the depreciated pound sterling and the prospects of increased exports, British industry can reorganize and adjust itself, there seems no compelling reason why it should not gain a new lease on life. But there will be no such plain sailing as once there was. To take a single instance: competition will have to be met from those foreign capitalists who, prohibited by tariffs from manufacturing in their own countries and shipping their products to England, will find it possible to establish factories here; and to compete, not only in the home market, but also in those

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Dominion ones in which British-produced goods may enjoy an advantage. It is Indian summer, rather than a return of spring, that is to be anticipated.

VI

The alternative, of course, is the growing self-sufficiency of the Dominions and colonies, and a slow, gradual decline of England itself to the status of a second-class Power. There are economists of my acquaintance who think that unless the National Government's high-tariff policy is to prove the overdose that constitutes its own antidote—in other words, unless it leads to an all-round scaling down of tariffs—this decline is inevitable. They think that unless a bargain can be struck with the other members of the Commonwealth, the protection of the home market alone by a tariff would not atone for the loss of such foreign markets as have been retained up to the present. To which my protectionist friends reply that economics is not as yet an exact science; and sometimes seem to append the unspoken comment, "Thank Heaven!"

CHAPTER XIV

I

ENGLAND, which began the war with a national debt of about seven hundred million pounds, emerged from it with a debt of more than seven thousand million. The national budget which, for the fiscal year, 1913-1914, balanced at just under £200,000,000, showed for 1917-1918 a deficiency of nearly £2,000,000,000; and the first post-war budget which balanced (that of 1920-1921) provided for exchequer receipts (most of which were raised by taxation) of £1,418,300,000. In the later 'twenties the budgets tended to run to just over £800,000,000. By 1921 retail prices had risen to two and one-half times the 1914 level, and wages had in most cases doubled or more than doubled. The income tax rose from a basic rate of one shilling and twopence per pound of income in 1914 to one of six shillings in 1918.

These high lights of the picture of governmental finance are given here merely to indicate that Britain emerged from the war with most of her preconceived financial and economic theories constituting distinctly a devastated area. At the time not many people bothered overmuch about it, since the Germans were going to pay the whole cost of the war, with perhaps a little over

for good measure. The subsequent disillusionment has lasted fourteen years, and the end is not yet. During those years the British people watched the mark and the ruble sink to the point where innumerable trillions of them were offered for a one-pound note; saw the franc and the lira lose four-fifths and three-fourths of their value; and observed a host of minor currencies performing strange gyrations. In the face of obvious danger signals they made a gallant effort to restore the pre-war value of their own currency, and managed to achieve their object for six years before bowing to the inevitable. I say "inevitable" because, as is pointed out by A. E. Feavearyear in his masterly work on "The Pound Sterling," "there is no doubt that the world's history can afford no example of a monetary unit which has been allowed for any very long period to appreciate"; and, again, "there is probably some principle deep down in human nature, or in the system which man has constructed for satisfying his wants by producing goods for a market, which secures that those who take a mortgage upon the means of production in order to live in idleness upon the interest shall in the long run be deprived of a portion of the wealth which they lend."

II

None the less, philosophy is cold comfort for those unfortunates who fall between the cogs when economic systems are changing gear. A very large proportion of Britain's population has been pinched in the post-war process; and, indeed, the social and political history of post-war England can almost be written about the

interplay of human and economic forces. The country has been swayed by no great movement (such as a religious one, for instance) that has transcended material considerations. Employing the broadest of generalizations, one may say that in post-war England the lower classes have on the whole fared better, or at least lost less, than the upper ones. The economic state of the country has facilitated a general political swing to the Left; so that what passes for Toryism to-day would have been rank heresy to the Tories of the 'nineties; and so that that which to-day is considered a liberal or even radical viewpoint would correspond more closely to our fathers' definition of anarchy. The upper or middle-class Englishman of 1931 concedes as commonplace many arguments and political theories which to his American prototype would bear a dangerously pink, if not bright red, tinge. And, for that matter, had you in 1914 predicted to an ordinarily intelligent English business man that for ten of the next fifteen years he would pay out one-third of his whole income in taxes; that millionaires would permit the State to take as much as 60 per cent of their revenues; or that at any one time as many as two and one-half million people would be unemployed and maintained by the government, he would not have wasted his time in replying to such lunacy.

What we actually have been witnessing is the disappearance, under the spur of economic and financial compulsion, of much of the splendid individualism which was carried over from the Victorian era. To be specific: in 1914 the average English business man be-

lieved, with his American colleague, that the *entrepreneur* who established a factory and hired workpeople was entitled to spend as little as he possibly could on his costs, and to sell his product at as high a rate as possible, all with the minimum possible amount of governmental interference. To-day it is more common to find a realization that only a peculiar and perhaps temporary organization of society enables anybody to establish any factory and to sell anything; that without the communal structure by means of which everything from police protection to rapid transit is maintained as a matter of course, even the most super of supermen would not get very far. Human nature being what it is, I do not pretend that the upper-class Englishman enjoys feeling like this. The point is that he does admit such feelings, and that he acts upon them and permits the government to be organized on the basis of the sum total of similar assumptions.

Thus, we have had for a decade the spectacle of the class which lived mostly on the interest from its investments being forced to realize capital; of the middle class, which lived easily and saved modestly, forced toward a subsistence, rather than an individually chosen, standard; and of the lower class on balance better housed, clothed, and fed than before. It is true that the number of people admittedly in receipt of incomes of over £5,000 a year has risen from 14,008 in 1914 to 20,974 in 1929. But at the beginning of 1929 it is probable that the actual purchasing power of money, expended as the richer man would do it, was considerably less than half what it was in 1914; and it

is certain that the amount of income taken by taxes was many times greater in the latter year. Official statistics, on the other hand, showed laboring-class income even in 1929 to be 75 per cent above the pre-war level; while for this class the cost of living had not increased more than proportionately, and the free services rendered by the State had greatly expanded.

III

Governmental finance during the post-war period has been characterized by three distinct policies. There was the 1919-1925 phase in which the pound, although depreciated, was being pushed toward its old gold parity; for although active deflation did not start until 1920, the Treasury and Bank of England had been guided since 1918 by the report of the Cunliffe Committee. The second phase, from 1925 to 1931, was one of working the gold standard under increasing difficulties. The third period commenced in the autumn of 1931, when the gold standard was again suspended and the paper pound quoted at a discount in those currencies which remained on a gold basis.

Although by the end of the war a top-heavy credit structure had been created, the Cunliffe Committee's imagination did not run beyond the application of the traditional remedies of retrenchment and reform. The government was to sober up and live within its means (*i.e.*, balance its budgets). It was to begin to pay its debts, quite as though the repayment of the deadweight national debt, even in the inflated currency then circulating, would not have run into several centuries of

effort. On the other hand, it must in fairness be inferred that those responsible for British monetary policy at that time had not anticipated that any of the war debts between the Allies would ever be funded; and that conversely they really believed that 132,000,000,-000 gold marks or some similar sum would eventually be obtained from Germany. Given such an attitude (which was at the time quite understandable), the Labor Party's suggestion of a capital levy, for the retirement of the national debt in the same depreciated currency in which much of it had been contracted, naturally carried little appeal; while Keynes's "Economic Consequences of the Peace," although it became a best seller, was accepted rather as a bit of pseudo-Shavian impudence than as a serious economic treatise.

The bright, hectic twelvemonth of 1919 was to ensue before the grasshoppers began to consider whether there might not, after all, be something to be said for the philosophy of the ant. Before 1920 was out the deflationary process had gone so far that the capital levy, had it ever been a practical suggestion, no longer was so, and the country, although it did not realize it, began the process of paying in relatively good pounds interest and sinking funds upon debts contracted in depreciated ones. Meanwhile, since Continental countries were wiping out their debt burdens (and, in some cases, their capital also) by inflation, unpleasant consequences ensued for British industry. The European rentier classes were being destroyed, but the industrialists were paying off their overhead and other fixed charges for a song; modernizing their plants; and, by virtue of their

low operating costs in real money, underselling Britain in the export field. On the other hand, the funding of the British war debt to the United States, before any steps had been taken to secure payment of the Allied debts to Britain, gave a strong impetus to the movement not only to keep the pound from depreciating, but to the plans of those who desired to force sterling back to its pre-war value.

During the next five years the bankers and the holders of fixed-interest bearing securities had their innings. The pound rose from a low point of \$3.19 in 1920 to \$4.86 in the spring of 1925. Obviously the repayment of the American debt became easier, for although the sum required for the service of this debt never at any time constituted so important a part of the British budget as would have been inferred, the existence of the debt perhaps played a disproportionate part in shaping the psychology of bankers and politicians. The City of London secured a fresh grip on its position as the world's premier money market, although so far as one can ascertain its position was not really seriously shaken by the existence of an inconvertible paper currency. Those people who were owed debts payable in sterling naturally benefited.

On the other hand, the fixed costs of industry rose sharply and the real burden of taxation became much heavier; while the multiplication of tariffs throughout the world added to the handicaps under which the British exporter worked. Conversely England, which was still, generally speaking, a free-trade country, became a desirable market from the standpoint of the for-

eign exporter working on lower costs or with more modern methods.

Despite these considerations, it is probable that England would have remained on the gold standard had the 1929 slump not ensued. Such reports as those of the Balfour and Macmillan committees spoke regretfully of the impossibility of going back on the decision to link the pound to gold; but neither these committees nor anyone else except a handful of unorthodox economists visualized the abandonment of the gold standard.

When, in September, 1931, that step finally was taken, the efforts made both by financiers and by politicians to explain it to the British public seemed to at least one observer to be curiously superficial. It was argued that the report of the Committee on Finance and Industry (the Macmillan Report) had frightened foreigners into believing that Britain's national financial position was unsound. The fright was genuine enough, for in the summer of 1931 there was scarcely any country whose finances, in the classical sense, were sound. But the Macmillan Report as a matter of actual fact received comparatively little publicity abroad; so that when, in August, the writers in the London press were thundering about the necessity for ending the Labor Government's "squandermania," their diatribes were being discounted overseas as merely moves in the British domestic political game. The pother as to whether or not the dole should be reduced included the assurances that foreign opinion would hold such a step as an earnest of Britain's determination to put her house in order; and, alternatively, indignant denials

that potential foreign lenders had imposed any such condition. Since, in any event, the possible saving in this direction did not exceed £15,000,000, foreign opinion must have been considered rather naïve. Finally, it was argued that the ubiquitous foreigner was apprehensive because he believed British bankers had lent to Germany, and could not get back, the money he had placed on deposit with them. The *coup de grâce* was, it was said, supplied by the mild mutiny in the Atlantic Fleet at Invergordon, distorted accounts of which had been circulated throughout the world, whereas, as a matter of fact, most of the reports cabled on the Invergordon incident, and of the editorials based upon them, were sober and restrained.

Only a handful of people seem to have realized that what was happening was that which inevitably does happen when the value of money becomes too high. The "causes" listed in the foregoing paragraph were causes only to the same degree in which the assassination at Serajevo was the cause of the World War. The fundamental reason dictating the divorce of the pound from gold for the second time within a decade was that one which forced France, Italy, Germany, and Russia into currency depreciation—a burden of debt beyond the reasonable capacity or willingness of the people to carry. Instinctive, although not willing or reasoned, appreciation of this fact was shown in the comment of the British press during the days immediately following the second suspension of the gold standard; when those newspapers which had warned most pontifically of the catastrophe which would follow if

the pound were to depreciate by so much as a single farthing, suddenly came out with what seemed to some Continental and American opinion an almost indecent expression of relief that the incubus of gold had been shuffled off. Here, again, it was not so much hypocrisy that was at work, as the English capacity for self-deception. For instance, the campaign slogan of the so-called National Government candidates in the 1931 election was the saving of the pound; yet when in the month following the election sterling lost 20 per cent of its gold value, the Chancellor of the Exchequer saw no cause for alarm, nor was there any outburst of popular indignation at the apparent disregard of the earlier pledge!

IV

Ironically enough, it was during the term of office of a government that stood for the class that is likely eventually to lose most heavily thereby, that the second post-war devaluation of the pound came about. At the time this chapter was written (December, 1931), neither currency inflation nor a rise in the price level had taken place. That both these developments would occur seemed, however, an inescapable conclusion as did also the deduction that it would be the recipients of fixed incomes who, in the long run, would suffer through the decreased value of the pound. The wheel had turned full cycle, and the people who had been most horrified by the surgical operation of the capital levy elected instead to lose their capital through the slow, wasting process of currency depreciation.

Even so, the comparative cheerfulness of the Englishman under his burden of taxation has been a source of wonderment to many observers of the post-war scene. It has been suggested by no less an authority than Viscount Snowden that one-third of the national income goes in taxation, national and local. In the post-war years the tendency has been all toward raising revenue by direct taxation, a method which creates upon the part of the taxpayer an acute consciousness of the contribution he is making.

The backbone of the taxation system has been, until the present time, the income tax and supertax. The regulations under which these are imposed have varied a good deal; but, broadly speaking, it may be said that for every pound of income in excess of £500, the British taxpayer has had to pay not less than one-fifth of his receipts to the taxgatherer. The basic rate of income tax has varied between 20 and 30 per cent, as compared with the 2 or 3 per cent of the American scale.

Thus, whereas for the middle-class American the income tax is something to be grumbled about and paid four times a year, it becomes for the Englishman in a corresponding station of life a daily preoccupation. The £1,000 a year man whose salary is raised by £200 a year does not feel that he is thereafter able to spend or invest that additional sum; as a matter of course he realizes that he must now set aside an additional £50 for income tax. The really wealthy man, 60 per cent of whose income goes in income tax, frequently refuses to indulge in apparently profitable little

sidelines or speculations because what would be left after the taxgatherer had been placated would not make the game worth the candle.

With such rates of taxation as have existed here, the collectors naturally have not been able to maintain the strictness of their American prototypes. Income tax nominally is payable on January 1 and July 1 of each year; but if the exchequer gets the bulk of it in within two months of either date it feels it is doing very well indeed. In the past the local collectors have exercised wide discretionary powers in cases where they have had no reason to suspect deliberately fraudulent intention; and in such cases usually have tempered justice with a good deal of mercy. Indeed, there was one collector some years ago who used to be a regular visitor in the "pubs" of his district on Friday evenings (Friday being pay day in that part of London); and who, while having a drink with his victims, would collect such sums as he could, ranging from £1 to £5, as installments of income tax, and would shift the beer mugs about on the bar to make space so that he could write out his official receipts!

CHAPTER XV

I

UNTIL the eighteenth century the English were quite frank about their conquests. England, like other countries, sought territorial aggrandizement overseas because it wanted an outlet for surplus population; because it wanted new spheres for trading; or, occasionally, simply and unashamedly for loot.

Clive, astonished at his own moderation in India, was an early and piquant example of the honest buccaneer confronted with the softening conscience of the times. After the American Revolution, British imperialism found it increasingly necessary to make excuses for itself—as, of course, the imperialists of other nations also did. By the end of the Victorian era the notion that a country should annex new territory simply because it wanted it and was strong enough to take it, was distinctly not fashionable. Aggression had to be justified on the grounds of protection of national interests; the safeguarding of the person or property of British subjects; or of the ultimate good of the victims.

Indeed, even so recently as a couple of years ago Sir Austen Chamberlain was found solemnly reflecting that it was the will of God that Britain had not

found it possible to carry out its repeated pledge to withdraw from Egypt. But in this disillusioned age Sir Austen's assumption of Divine interference with the intentions and desires of the Foreign Office produced chiefly irreverent laughter. Times had changed even since Labouchère fluttered the dovecotes by his remark that he didn't object to the old man (Gladstone) always having an ace up his sleeve, but only to his assumption that God put it there. To-day there are more Labouchères than Gladstones. The game of colonial expansion isn't what it used to be when there was the comforting certainty that:

Whatever happens, we have got
The Maxim gun, and they have not.

To-day they not only have machine guns, but also the infinitely more powerful weapons of publicity and boycott. Gone are the days when a colony was a colony, and no nonsense about it; when its trade could be reserved to the mother country, and its resources utilized to provide profitable administrative, military, and clerical jobs for deserving younger sons. What price glory, when self-determination and the rights of subject races are fashionable; when even the most backward colonies are getting their legislative councils and exercising an increasing degree of self-government, yet continuing to demand the protection of the British Navy at bargain rates? And even as these lines are being written, the greatest Conservative majority of modern times in the House of Commons is engaged in passing the Statute of Westminster, which

irrevocably removes the last remaining vestiges of British legal control over the Dominions.

II

It is perhaps paradoxical, perhaps only typically English, that the first serious effort to reunite the Empire on a basis more tangible than that of sentiment should have arisen just at the moment when the Dominions were, for all practical purposes, declaring their independence. This effort is variously called Imperial Preference or Empire Free Trade, and it is supposed to be Lord Beaverbrook's brain child. But in 1889 one Rudyard Kipling wrote:

. . . And then, later, when the freed States had plunged into hot water, fought their fights, over-speculated, and otherwise conducted themselves like younger sons, what a coming together and revision of tariffs, ending in one great iron band girdling the earth. Within that limit, Free Trade. Without, rancorous protection. It would be too vast a hornet's nest for any combination of Powers to disturb. The dream will not come about for a long time, but we shall accomplish something like it one of these days.¹

One wonders. That was more than thirty years ago, and a good many infant industries have matured in the Dominions since then. Empire Free Trade does not seem within the range of possibilities; although there is every indication of an extension of the Imperial Preference idea. But whether it will go so far in establishing a community of commercial interests that a renewed

¹ "From Sea to Sea," Vol. I, Chap. V.

community of political interests will perforce follow, is for the future to demonstrate.

In the meantime the post-war years have been distinctly lean ones for the imperialists. The great Dominions have become "free and autonomous communities, in no way subordinate." Ireland has been allowed to go its way. The question regarding India is not so much whether self-government will be granted, as when and how this will be done.

This phase of the evolution of the Empire has been carried out in almost such a "fit of absent-mindedness" as was the original creation of that Empire. Without having heard any great debate about it, the British public gradually came to the realization that the Dominions had separate votes in the League of Nations Assembly. Until the Irish plenipotentiaries were invited to Downing Street in 1921, the average man in the street was only vaguely aware that there was, as always, trouble in Ireland. References began to creep into the newspapers about the Canadian Minister to Washington; at first they looked like misprints, but they weren't. From an Imperial Conference to which nobody paid very much attention while it was in session there emerged the "free and autonomous" Dominion Charter of 1926. Until Mr. Gandhi and his loin cloth made the front pages, the man in the street had only dimly appreciated the fading light of "the brightest jewel in his Majesty's crown."

Of course there was a reason for the apparently apathetic acceptance of these developments, although it seldom was definitely formulated. With income tax

at five shillings in the pound, glory and prestige are luxuries too expensive to maintain unless they pay dividends. Moreover, the average man between 1914 and 1918 did enough fighting to last him a lifetime. The benefits arising from the aftermath of that life-and-death struggle on behalf of his own country did not impress him as sufficiently great to justify him in undergoing a similar experience on behalf of the mandated natives of Papua. If the blighters wanted to go, why, let 'em go, and good riddance!

Naturally there were protests from the Diehards. The boys of the bulldog breed were getting soft! The thin red line was breaking! The White Man's Burden had been laid down!

But not very many people took them seriously. Too many profound and personal studies had been carried out regarding the effect of high explosive shells and poison gas upon the thin red line; too many men had, at the end of the war, laid down their share of the White Man's Burden with a sense of profound relief. Too many business men had grasped the fact that, after you apply the mailed fist, you still must reckon with the fact that a Chinese coolie can operate an automatic loom almost as well as can a Manchester man with five generations of industrial experience behind him. Too many M. P.'s knew what would happen if new campaigns of any importance should have to be financed. The romanticism of the 'nineties was replaced by a hard realism; and the Diehards figured as rather forlorn Canutes, vainly pronouncing their invocations against the unheeding waves of popular indifference,

or even of definite hostility. For the sort of thing that the intelligent Englishman of the 1930's writes and reads carries little consolation for the mailed-fist school. Many quotations in defense of this assertion easily might be given; but I have preferred one from Mr. Alan Bott's "Our Fathers" which, incidentally, is a book that should be read by anyone interested in the late Victorian period. After noting that British troops between 1870 and 1900 fought no fewer than 110 little wars and frontier skirmishes, Mr. Bott points out:

Annexation became a habit in the 'seventies, and in the 'eighties Gladstone could not stop it. The process was made popular as a regeneration for lands which, by error in the workings of Providence, had come into the possession of backward blacks or white races unfit to govern. . . . A small British mission pushed through the jungle to persuade the King of Benin to put down human sacrifice. It was ambushed and massacred on the way back. "Benin will now," wrote a leader writer of the 'nineties, "become a British protectorate *in the natural course of events.*"

III

The strong, silent man from the great open spaces on the fringes of Empire has become a slightly ridiculous figure in contemporary England; ridiculous, because he is out of date and doesn't know it. The last really perfect specimen of this fast-disappearing type to come under my personal investigation was introduced to me by a mutual friend in the India Office some four or five years ago. He was a splendid exam-

ple of the Great Tufted Colonel and he was very indignant. It appeared that he had just returned from re-visiting India after thirty years' absence, and that the country had simply gone to the dogs, sir! Why, would you believe it, he hadn't been an hour in Bombay before he had trouble with a native who had lingered in front of him on the pavement and whom he had, there-upon, naturally kicked into the street. And damme, sir, if that native hadn't the impertinence to go and find a policeman! And the policeman, instead of apologizing, had in all seriousness admonished the colonel that he mustn't go kicking people about the street like that. . . . Well, I mean to say!

Now and again during the last fourteen years there has slipped into British official policy a note reminiscent of the time when there was only one way to deal with the Lesser Breeds Without the Law. The Egyptians have been particularly unfortunate in this respect; for such gestures of disrespect as they have made have elicited squadrons of battleships off Alexandria and threats to cut off their water supply. The inhabitants of the Island of Cyprus likewise picked a peculiarly inappropriate moment for their little essay in self-determination. But as to the people of the Dominions, one has sometimes been given cause to wonder whether it was they or the home government who betrayed the greater impatience to "cut the painter." As far as India is concerned, one has only to glance back over the few years since the inception of the Montagu-Chelmsford policy to realize the truly enormous reorientation that has taken place in British public opinion. The people

who do business with India, who have relatives in the Indian services, or who own Indian securities naturally hold out for "safeguards." None the less many of these people would view with equanimity the bestowal upon India of a far greater measure of real self-government than was, for instance, envisaged in the report of the Simon Commission; while the public at large, although distinctly and perhaps justifiably skeptical over the ability of India's heterogeneous population to govern itself without making a mess of it, consistently refuses to get excited over the prospect that the experiment will be tried.

IV

The changing status of the Empire (or Commonwealth, if you prefer) naturally has found reflection in British foreign policy since 1918. One might almost say that it has dominated that policy, since there have been frequent indications of uncertainty as to whether the Foreign Office considers itself more essentially concerned with the European system or the overseas system of nations. Even to-day there is no hard-and-fast rule to indicate how much of the Empire is committed when a treaty is initialed on behalf of Great Britain. The foreigner is sure of England, Scotland, Wales, and northern Ireland; beyond that the matter is one for speculation.

It is merely to restate a truism to point out that British foreign policy for at least ten years has been essentially directed toward the maintenance of peace. Certain actions may from time to time have seemed to

consort oddly with such an aim, but this is a matter of interpretation. Great Britain stands to gain a great deal from the existence of settled trading conditions and to lose a great deal whenever war breaks out anywhere. There is the further consideration, sensed if not explicitly thought out, that the present organization of society here could scarcely stand the strain of another major conflict. One more such victory as that of 1918 might be fatal.

Subject to this limitation, British diplomacy has pursued two main objectives. One is quite definitely the maintenance of good relations with the United States. The other is the prevention of the creation of a Continental hegemony by any single nation; and this necessarily has given British policy a fundamentally anti-French and anti-Russian trend. Now and again there crop up incidents which seem to indicate tendencies exactly the opposite of those emphasized above, but in the long run these minor variations in the graph flatten out into insignificance.

Generally speaking, the Foreign Office has played its cards so obviously that most Continental, and many American, negotiators have suspected it of most devilish and Machiavellian subtlety. On the few occasions when it really has tried to be subtle (as, for instance, with regard to the famous Anglo-French compromise), it usually has come a cropper.

Examined in the light of the aims just suggested, British post-war diplomacy is seen to have pursued a perfectly consistent course. For two or three years following 1918 it was difficult to determine how the

nations were going to align themselves, and Whitehall marked time. By the end of 1921 what the British took to be the outlines of the post-war structure began to appear, and British policy to be shaped accordingly. The corner stone of American policy was laid in the conclusion of the Washington Treaty and in the abrogation of the Anglo-Japanese alliance. That of the Continental policy was chiseled out of the series of Reparations Conferences which spread through the early 'twenties and at length took shape as a tendency toward leniency to Germany and forbearance toward Italy. The refusal to participate in the invasion of the Ruhr marked the definite reversion to the doctrine which, for nearly four centuries, has kept Britain fundamentally in opposition to the dominant Continental Power, a policy which has been followed more or less faithfully up to such recent happenings as the filching of an Austrian loan from under France's nose in the summer of 1931; and the even later warning by Mr. Baldwin that Britain could not permit German reparations to take priority over commercial debts.

In the foreign, as in the domestic, field, the party labels affixed to the Cabinets in office since 1918 have meant comparatively little. The French found Lord Curzon and Mr. Snowden equally annoying. Mr. MacDonald had to remonstrate with Moscow just as sharply as did his Conservative predecessors. For a time the excessively Francophile sentiments of Sir Austen Chamberlain, which corresponded with those of a small but influential Tory group, caused a little embarrassment; but this passed with the comment attrib-

uted to a famous French politician upon Sir Austen's lyrical declaration that it was possible to love France as one loves a beautiful woman. The comment cannot be reproduced here, but it was the sort a Frenchman *would* make.

v

Among the rank and file of the British nation there are, of course, chauvinists and pacifists, isolationists and co-operators, pro-Leaguers and anti-Leaguers, pro-Americans and anti-Americans. No such single group, however, has anything like the coherence or the influence of the American isolationists. England has had foreign entanglements for so many centuries, and has seen so many others develop foreign entanglements whether they wanted to or not, that to the average well-informed man it seems a waste of time to pronounce for or against foreign entanglements as such. You might (he feels) with equal logic protest against old age; it is pretty certain to affect all of us sooner or later.

Fundamentally, the foreign policy of the man in the street here is as simple as this: he didn't enjoy the last war, and he doesn't want another one.

If he felt reasonably certain that the next war could be averted by means of the League of Nations, or by Locarno or Kellogg treaties, or by an offensive and defensive alliance with Patagonia, he would be in favor of it. Not being able to achieve such certainty, he nevertheless manifests a certain complacency toward any institution or instrument which seems to possess any

utility whatever in the desired direction. Thus, while he smiles sadly when the League of Nations is mentioned, he does not instruct his representative in Parliament to vote for Britain's withdrawal from the League. He regards the League as a pretty poor sort of safeguard, but still better than none at all.

As far as war debts and reparations are concerned, the ordinary Englishman thinks they should all have been washed out ten years ago. Nor can this attitude be dismissed with a shrug as a natural one, arising solely from self-interest. It is true that, although England was, on paper, an enormous gainer on balance in this matter, many of the debts owing to her were, and are, bad ones. The fact remains that by the various agreements that have been concluded England stands to cover her out-payments by her receipts; and that by complete cancellation she would neither gain nor lose in the budgetary sense. The feeling of the non-technical Englishman is simply that these transactions perpetuate, to the benefit of nobody, the after-effects of a war that had better have been finally liquidated long since.

The more thoughtful Englishman goes even farther. He sees in the left-overs of the last war the seeds of new wars. He and his generation will go to extreme lengths to avoid another conflict; but the war generation already is getting middle-aged. Children who were four years old in 1914 voted in the 1931 elections. There are now some millions of young people in England who do not remember war save as a pleasurable excitement in the routine of school days; what is there in their present position or prospects that seems so

preferable to the conflicts against which their elders warn them? What, exactly, are the blessings of peace to an unemployed man who enjoyed better food and, on the whole, greater physical comfort during most of the late unpleasantness?

It seems to the thinking man here that much of the discrepancy between what the peace is and what it ought to be is due to the general failure to put an end to the aftermath of the war. To this source he is inclined to trace unemployment, trade depression, and currency troubles. Given another decade of what he now believes to have been futile and shortsighted "messing about," the War Babies will have reached military age, and may well receive as their epitaph the enigmatic motto of Mary Queen of Scots:

En ma fin est mon commencement.

VI

Little exception can be taken to the assertion of British statesmen of all parties that this country has followed precept with example in the matter of disarmament. The regular army contains 208,573 men, all voluntarily enlisted.

The country possesses 908 military aëroplanes, as against France's 1,358, Italy's 1,100, and the 974 belonging to the United States.

One cannot generalize quite so confidently, perhaps, about the more complicated matter of maritime armaments; but at least it is undeniable that the British Navy is far inferior in numbers, both of personnel and of

ships, to the establishment of 1914. During the post-war decade spokesmen for this country repeatedly have advocated the complete abolition of battleships and of submarines, together with a reduction in size and armament of other types of warship. Nobody pretends that such a policy would not benefit England in a strategic, as well as a financial or humanitarian, sense. The smaller and weaker the world's navies become, the more important will be the great British mercantile marine; and the widespread distribution of British bases and coaling stations likewise makes practicable the employment of warships with a comparatively limited range of action. But—it is open to other countries to create merchant navies, and in the meantime one need not read too subtle or too diabolical a motive into what would, after all, be a perfectly logical policy if it were adopted at its face value.

CHAPTER XVI

I

It is obviously inconsistent to begin a chapter devoted to Anglo-American relations with the generalization that these relations would probably flourish more if they were discussed less. Yet discussions on this subject show no sign of abating, and in this circumstance one seeks justification for adding to their sum total.

My personal opinion is that the best treatise obtainable on Anglo-American relations is Kipling's "Error in the Fourth Dimension," and that the next best is Wilson's "Ruggles of Red Gap." But neither of these is concerned with the post-war years, during which the clasp of the hands across the sea has sometimes seemed noticeably to relax. And it is just during these years that Americans and Englishmen have read and heard and seen more of each other than during any other equal period of time!

It is customary to assume that increased contact between nations leads to better understanding and better appreciation. Twelve years of observation of the relations between people of a good many countries has led me to wonder whether the assumption necessarily is valid, and whether increased contact does not entail just as many possibilities of misunderstanding as it

does of understanding. History is familiar with the hyper-nationalist who is constitutionally incapable of finding any good in other nations, and with "the idiot who praises in enthusiastic tone all centuries but this and any country but his own." These people are hopeless cases. They should be kept at home, but unfortunately are not. However, both categories are, I like to think, in a minority as compared with the ordinary man who tries, to the extent that his education and his environment permit, to maintain a reasonably open mind. It is this man who in the last analysis will tip one way or the other the scales of international relationships; and it is the effect of wider contact between this man and the people of other countries with which I am concerned.

II

Evidently the American and the Englishman can learn about each other in quite a number of ways. They can read about each other in newspapers, magazines, or books; they can see each other's plays and motion pictures; can listen to each other's music, and even to each other's voices on the radio; and, finally, they can learn from personal contacts.

Right at the beginning there are possibilities of trouble. The average Englishman and the average American form their impressions of each other through different media. American newspapers print daily many times as much English news as the English ones do of American news; and the news is in each case differently selected and presented. Three London news-

papers and a Manchester one publish day by day what might be regarded as a well-balanced, if not always adequate, budget of American happenings. The others usually are accurate enough; but over any period of time infallibly tend to create for their readers the concept of an America which would certainly be unrecognizable to any American. During the early 1920's the America that emerged from the columns of the penny press looked rather less like the continent that we know than it did like a large Ellis Island, completely surrounded by homes wrecked through divorce and prohibition. Things have improved somewhat; but the re-emergence of Reno as a divorce center still gets far more space than a presidential speech not directly concerned with foreign policy.

Nothing would be more unfair than to attribute this state of affairs to a deliberate anti-American bias on the part either of newspaper owners or editors. British newspaper men may be assumed to know their jobs, and to give their public what it wants. And the larger British public does not want to read serious things about the United States. It is not remotely interested in American politics. It wants to read about that bright, improbable land of the films and the jazz bands; about that curious country which passes prohibition laws and yet tolerates widespread drinking; about Main Street and the Babbitts. It wants, in a word, to read about those facets of American life which are as different as possible from the familiar home life that it knows and understands; and in doing so it inevitably gets a picture that is hopelessly distorted.

"But" (one hears the objection) "what about American books and plays? These surely do not reach the English in an emasculated form?"

It is true that they do not; but at best this is only a half-truth. Such American books and plays as come to England are certainly more representative than is the American news in the press. But they reach only a handful of people as compared with the newspaper-reading public.

The second great medium through which the majority of English people derive their notions of the United States and its people is the motion picture and the talking picture. I am not even sure that the impressions gained in this fashion do not predominate. It is all very well to argue that surely intelligent people do not take the movies seriously. In the first place, the majority of people in any nation are not intelligent in any strict sense of the word. And in the second, it should be remembered that the English picture-goer does not live surrounded by concrete and unescapable demonstrations of the unreality of celluloid life. He smiles when Hollywood shows him an English peer who wears a straw hat with a dinner jacket; that is because he knows that such things are not done in England. But how is he to know whether the people who live in Park Avenue or on Main Street really behave as they do on the screen? As far as his newspaper reading extends, he has been given little reason to doubt that the movies are wrong. Remember, also, that 90 per cent of the pictures he sees are of American origin. If the people, say, of Trenton or of Kansas City had for

twenty years watched movies of which 90 per cent were British, and of which the other 10 per cent, being American, seemed crude and amateurish by contrast, can there be much doubt about the impressions they would have formed regarding British life?

Again one hears an objection:

"But what about the American tourists? Can't the English see that these people don't behave as characters do in the movies?"

Oh, don't they!

That is precisely the trouble. Nine out of ten American visitors to England comport themselves as quietly and agreeably as they do at home. And, outside of Canterbury and Stratford-on-Avon and such places, they are scarcely recognized as tourists at all; nor do they come into contact with any but a limited number of English people. The tenth visitor, either through self-consciousness, or lack of balance, or plain damn foolishness, makes a nuisance of himself; and is immediately hailed as the typical American tourist!

Observe, therefore, the completion of the vicious circle. The ordinary American visitor, when he is discovered to be such, is surprised and annoyed to find a general assumption that he talks through his nose, employs the slang current on Broadway twenty years ago, eats peas with a knife, wears shoes with humps on the toes, and was born wearing tortoise-shell glasses and with a cigar in his mouth.

It might be replied that the average American visitor to England ought to have enough common sense to overlook, or at least to be amused at, such an attitude.

And here is where we come up against the paradoxical fact that travel—the physical mechanism of travel—has been made too easy. When a voyage across the ocean was an undertaking not to be thought of lightly, the traveler approached his journeyings with a wholly different mental attitude. He was prepared to find that foreign countries would in fact be foreign. He had not read or heard as much about them as he has to-day, and was more prepared to make allowances. But to-day, when there are so many points of similarity between nations, the traveler is very apt to make more of the comparatively small differences that still exist than he did in other days of great differences.

Finally, the number of English people who actually visit the United States is very small compared with the number of Americans who visit England; and it is very different in social cross-section. The middle-class Englishman never thinks of taking his family to America just for a holiday. The English people who are afforded opportunities to learn about the United States through visiting that country are for the most part those who have comparatively few false impressions to be corrected: members of the upper and upper middle classes who already have ties of relationship or of business with Americans—writers, artists, and actors.

III

Despite the possibilities of individual misunderstanding, Anglo-American relations in the larger sense entered the second post-war decade in a condition far

healthier than that which existed during a large part of the 1920's.

When the war ended, there was not overmuch cordiality between the two countries. Many English people were still annoyed because the United States had not entered the war until 1917. (As a matter of fact I have never yet found an Englishman who really believes that it would not have been possible for us to have come in by 1915 at the latest.) Still others were apprehensive lest the United States, comparatively fresh and without war weariness, would try to annex the major portion of the spoils of victory. Even on the personal side, British and American soldiers and sailors who had come into contact with each other did not seem to have formed impressions which were wholly favorable. And to almost every Englishman it seemed as though the United States were wealthy beyond the dreams of avarice.

It did not take long for other sources of irritation to appear. First of all there came the Senate's repudiation of President Wilson and of the Versailles Treaty which to most people here, who were and are completely ignorant of American governmental procedure, looked merely as though the United States were backing out of an engagement solemnly entered into.

Then in quick succession other causes of friction began to arise. The American attitude toward the Irish question was resented. Naval rivalry began to crop up. The question of the war debt, which had scarcely been so much as mentioned here, was raised. And there were pinpricks over such matters as the detention of British subjects at Ellis Island, the seizure of British rum-

runners, and the tendency of American tariffs to increase.

Fortunately the outstanding political questions were liquidated reasonably quickly. The formation of the Irish Free State went far to alienate such sympathy as the United States had shown for the cause of Irish independence. The conclusion of the Washington Treaty, while it did not check naval rivalry completely, nevertheless removed the subject from general to specialized discussion. The Baldwin-Mellon war debt agreement was distinctly unpopular here, but in any event that matter was settled; and the subsequent rise in the exchange value of the pound exercised a healing effect upon the soreness of those who felt that the debt should have been wiped out completely.

With these major sources of potential quarreling removed, it seemed as though the two countries would settle down to bicker happily over the minor ones, to which, incidentally, were added the inexplicable American desire to have a merchant marine, and the bothersome American tendency to win with some regularity in international sporting events. In return for American interest in Ireland, Egypt, and India, the English began to observe happily that we were having our own troubles in Central America; and that the efforts of the Coast Guard did not seem to exercise any really deleterious effect upon the earning capacity of the Scotch distilleries.

The year 1927 witnessed a sharp relapse. The Geneva Naval Conference, which had interested the British public so little that many newspapers did not

even bother to report its proceedings, blew up with a bang. Its failure left the impression here that the United States, now phenomenally wealthy and prosperous, was no longer amenable to any kind of reason; that the American people wanted a cruiser fleet as a new toy, while for Britain the matter was one of life or death.

It seemed to me an indication of the more reasonable tone of Anglo-American dealings that neither country, so to speak, "went off the deep end." The British tactfully refrained from constructing the vast number of cruisers which their representatives at Geneva had claimed to be necessary; the naval construction projected by Washington was sharply cut down. By 1930 it was possible for an agreement to be reached in London which might just as well have been concluded at Geneva in 1927.

In the meantime there had transpired one of those unpredictable occurrences which sometimes exercise effects out of all proportion to their immediate import. King George fell desperately ill. As a person his Majesty had never been especially well known in the United States, either favorably or unfavorably; nevertheless a quick wave of sympathy for the British royal family spread over America, and Englishmen of all classes were surprised, gratified, and touched by the spontaneity and genuineness of American feeling, the reports of which received great publicity here. It was as though there seemed in the very unpremeditatedness of the American response an indication of the essential similarity of feeling between the peoples.

IV

As the final great solvent of Anglo-American jealousy, there was the economic depression which started in 1929. In this matter the British attitude may have been neither very reasonable nor very generous, but it was extremely human. For ten years the people of this country had been experiencing hard times. During those years the income-tax collector had never taken less than one-fifth their annual income; and during most of them, even more. The debt to the United States was being paid; the greater portion of the debts owing to Britain, forgiven. British industry was limping; British ships were laid up; British overseas markets were disappearing; and a million or more unemployed were being supported by the State. . . . Yet there across the Atlantic was a nation flouting all known laws of economics and getting away with it. It was making the world pay tribute to it, and getting that tribute in gold because it would not buy other nations' goods; while with its surplus, carelessly left over from its domestic consumption, it was evangelizing the world in the gospel of Big Business. Office boys and street cleaners were becoming millionaires on the stock market; the meanest home had a bathroom like that of a London luxury hotel; without effort Chrysler was piled on Woolworth, Empire State on Chrysler. Stenographers wore silk stockings; negro servants rode to their work in Packards!

It seemed bewildering and unfair. Was the lesson of all previous human experience illusory? And, if so,

could anything prevent the whole planet from coming eventually under American domination?

Even while it dabbled in the American stock market, the British public continued to ask these questions. And then the crash came.

It must be admitted that the first reaction in England was one of relief; relief that, after all, the multiplication table and the laws of gravity and of acceleration had not suddenly gone Wall Street, or even Einstein. A bright bubble was no more real wealth than it was in the South Sea period, and the Americans, at the long last, were not quite supermen!

Of course this mood did not last long; nor was it ever expressed so badly as I have described it. Long before 1930 was out the English were quite genuinely longing for a return of prosperity in the United States; and as genuinely pitying us for the instability of our banking system and for our lack of proper governmental machinery to deal with the unemployment problem. One can, after all, sympathize with that which one understands.

v

What of the future?

As long as every important speaker at a banquet of the Pilgrims or the English Speaking Union or the American Society felt it necessary to lug into his oration the assurance that "war between our two countries is unthinkable," the prospects were not so bright as they might have been. One does not declare that something is unthinkable unless he has, in reality, thought about it.

It seems to me a healthy sign that during recent years this *cliché* has been dropped; that postprandial orators no longer feel the urge, as it were, to whistle in the dark. The bonds of common language, common law, still are worked pretty hard; but as an acid solvent for the saccharine mixture there are seldom lacking either Englishmen or Americans to point out that language and law are diverging in the two countries as rapidly as may be.

Perhaps the best perspective upon the relations between Great Britain and the United States would be that obtainable from a point outside either of them. If for this purpose one selects the Continent of Europe, which is still the center of political gravity for the world, one finds the average Continental diplomat trying hard to believe in the essential struggle for supremacy between the English-speaking nations, in the face of his melancholy conviction of their essential community of interest.

From the Continental point of view, England and the United States are strikingly alike, despite their most confusing superficial dissimilarities. Both peoples seem to the European slightly hypocritical in their insistence upon ideals and moral values; juvenile in their refusal to face obvious facts; and hopelessly unpredictable as regards the conclusions they are apt to draw from given premises. So the dream of Foreign Offices from Paris to Moscow is Anglo-American rivalry; but their nightmare is Anglo-American co-operation.

Probably somewhere between these extremes will lie the actual course. We shall continue to have at one end

of the scale the professional glad-handers, and at the other the professional tail-twisters. There will be in each nation publicists who will continue to attribute to the really rather ordinary statesmen of the other designs which would make Machiavelli seem simple and ingenuous. The American tourist will continue to suspect the chance-met Englishman of coldness, of lack of sympathy, even of rudeness, when the real trouble with the latter is merely his reserve, his quite genuine lack of interest, and his habit of saying what he thinks without sugar-coating. The Englishman, on the other hand, will find the American embarrassingly breezy, noisy, and even blatant, in which diagnosis he will merely confirm the fact that the American lives in an atmosphere of fewer inhibitions and freer individual self-expression.

Since it is the Englishman, rather than the American, who is here under observation, one cannot overlook the stock arguments of Anglophobes to the effect that John Bull is arrogant, aloof, supercilious, self-sufficient, contemptuous of other nations; in a word, that he constantly tries to "high-hat" the rest of creation. Undoubtedly there still exist some Englishmen who produce this impression upon individual Americans, and a great many in whom the old superiority complex seems latent rather than absent.

Is it necessary here to emphasize that Englishmen, like many other people, are contradictory beings, at once simple and complex, peaceful and belligerent, friendly and aloof? Consistency is not a universal, not even a very common, characteristic of our so-called civilization, in which we inevitably are conditioned by

environment and inheritance. In present-day England perhaps the strongest single observable tendency is that of a mental reorientation from the attitude which prevailed more or less from 1814 to 1914, a period during which the Empire was undoubtedly the most powerful economic and political unit in the world; but it would be useless to pretend that the old attitude is not even yet the complete gospel of some Englishman and the partial philosophy of many others.

Setting aside the possibility that a reasonable amount of national or personal pride need not necessarily be deplorable, one finds that it is the manner of the Englishman, rather than what he actually says or does, that causes the annoyance. He is accused less of boasting of his superiority than of assuming it as a law of nature.

For a thousand years English insularity and English conservatism have been commented upon by foreign observers; but so have English tolerance and English charm. In her "Tudor England Through Venetian Eyes," Dr. E. Gurney Salter relates amusingly how one Venetian ambassador of the sixteenth century reflected in a letter to his chief, "What strange fancies prevail among these people, and how much their ideas differ from those of other nations"; while another concluded that "the wealth and civilization of the world are here, and those who call the English barbarians appear to me to render themselves such."

The one more or less consistent note that one finds throughout the medieval and even modern comments is one of insistence upon the distrust, especially among the lower classes, of foreigners. Indeed, the prompt-

ness and unanimity with which the nation in 1931 relapsed into blaming "the foreigner" (details unspecified) for the fall in the value of the pound sterling might be cited as indicating xenophobia to be even yet a strongly marked British characteristic. And yet—somehow or other—the charge does not ring true.

Thus, when an American woman who recently visited England wrote to the *Daily Telegraph* to complain of the inexplicable hostility of the general public toward Americans, her letter elicited dozens of pained, and obviously genuine, denials that any such sentiment existed save in her imagination. In them it was pointed out that every effort was made to attract American visitors and to render their stay here enjoyable; and it was suggested that the lady who wrote the original letter was over-sensitive. She probably was; most tourists are. She none the less voiced feelings by no means uncommon among her fellow travelers, all too many of whom arrive in England full of vague good will, but leave profoundly thankful for the width of the Atlantic Ocean.

The point that I did not notice to be strongly stressed on either side of the correspondence, but which was nevertheless quite plain, was that the American lady said "hostility" when she meant "indifference." To that charge I think the plea should be, "Guilty." In this country the average individual finds social self-defense in a personal reserve, a psychological barrier not only against the American tourist, but against the outer world generally. If he is interested, whether in his own countrymen or in foreigners, he will thaw quickly

enough, but he is not really very often interested in either category by the mere fact of their common humanity.

And there are so many little things to go wrong—the little things that pass unnoticed in a country where the visitor does not enjoy the great but dangerous advantage of a more or less common language and habit! The broad “a” and clipped inflection of the upper and upper middle classes unfortunately sound to many Americans like an affectation of speech. The readiness of the casually encountered Englishman, once drawn into conversation, to ask about prohibition and gangsters and Chicago seems to the visitor to indicate an unhealthy interest in the atypical aspects of American civilization; whereas these are precisely the things of which the Englishman has read and heard most (often from Hollywood’s own talkies!), and in which he is most interested. When the position is reversed, my English friends tell me that the dole is the topic about which they are first questioned in America. The willingness of English people to discuss in public, and in clear and penetrating, if not loud, tones matters which the average American would consider entirely private, gives the listener an uncomfortable feeling that he is being overlooked much as though he were a piece of furniture. The effort of the Englishman to delve into his memory to recall some American he once met who “really was quite a decent fellow” is well meant; but it is likely to lead the American to some such sarcastic reply as that, curiously enough, he himself has encountered occasional Englishmen who weren’t wholly impos-

sible. His inability to penetrate behind the mask of the professional servant class depresses the American who is disposed to be gregarious. The silly restrictions upon the movements of aliens cause him to waste time and temper.

Trivialities, all, but they count enormously. On the other hand, there is always the subtle (and, from the English point of view, complimentary) differentiation in those hopeful advertisements in the agony column of the *Times*, which begin:

To Americans *and foreigners*. A lady of title would consider—

VI

Undoubtedly, in the future, occasions will arise when the American and Englishman, finding themselves on opposite sides, will be tempted to act in the light of the accumulated misinformation of history. Just as certainly there will be other circumstances in which, with every apparent justification for antagonism, the Englishman and the American will, to the bewilderment of the rest of the world, go off and have a drink together.

The hope may be permitted that the latter occasions will, despite the Eighteenth Amendment, predominate. For we are really very like each other—particularly in our inconsistencies.

